

S E R M O N S

O N

Several SUBJECTS,

B Y

SAMUEL CLARKE, D D.

Late Rector of St. *James's Westminster.*

The Tenth and Last VOLUME.

Published from the AUTHOR'S Manuscript,

To which is added,

A Complete INDEX of the TEXTS of
SCRIPTURE preached on;

A Second of the TEXTS occasionally
explained; and

A Third of the principal MATTERS con-
tained in this and the foregoing Volumes.

B Y

JOHN CLARKE, D. D. Dean of *Sarum.*

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Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

THE Duty of Contentment and Resignation to the Will of God, is a Duty whose obligation is evident even from the Law of Nature. For since we at first received our very Being from God, and owe our Preservation to him every moment, and every thing we enjoy is his free Gift; 'tis plain, that All Thanks are due to him for whatever good we receive; and no man has any just reason to repine against Providence, for the want of such good things as he has no right to demand. As to the Calamities and Troubles incident to human Life; with regard to These

also, *Sinful* Creatures have no just cause of murmuring: For *wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the Punishment of his Sins?* Lam. iii. 39. Under the Revelation of the Gospel, the Grounds and Motives of Contentment are become yet *much stronger*, since the Concerns of this present World, short and uncertain and transitory in Themselves, appear still *more* transitory, when compared with that *Life and Immortality* which is now *brought to Light*; and the *Afflictions* of this present time, are not *worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed hereafter*. Proportionable to the real Value of Things, ought to be men's Care and Concern about them: And therefore with the *greatest reason*, our Saviour, in exhorting his Disciples to take care of their *eternal* Interest, bids them, *comparatively* speaking, to take No thought *what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed*; For *after all these things* (says he) *do the Gentiles seek*; For *your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things*. Literally understood, the Precept, to the greatest part of Christians, is manifestly impracticable: For the *Necessaries of Life* must needs be taken care for; and without the Support of the *present* life, there can be no room for the practice of those Virtues, by which we are to be prepared for that which is *to come*. There *must* therefore be *some Distinctions* made, in our understanding This and the like Precepts: For want of attending to which, Many may be apt to say, *This is a hard saying, and who can bear it?* And yet in reality, the distinctions upon which the right understanding of this Precept depends, are as plain and obvious, in the nature of the Thing, and in the construction and connexion of the Words themselves, as other the most usual figures
and

and comparative ways of expression in common Speech, which no man ever mistakes. To set this matter therefore in a clear and distinct Light, I observe,

I. *First*; THAT there was a particular *time*, and there were particular *persons*, when and to whom, and when and to whom *only*, this Precept was given in its *literal* and *strict* sense. Our Saviour sent forth his Apostles to preach the Gospel *from City to City*, in such a manner as was altogether inconsistent with their attending to *Any* worldly affairs. Accordingly he invested them with miraculous Powers, and promised to afford them a miraculous Support. And suitable to the Circumstances of such a Mission, were the Precepts he gave them to observe therein. *Sell that ye have, and give alms*, Luke xii. 33. *Freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor bress in your purses: Nor scrip for your journey; neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat*, Mat. x. 8. At another time, and in other circumstances, his directions to them were very different: Luk. xxii. 36; *Now be that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and be that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.* In like manner the words of the *Text*, considered as spoken to the *Apostles*, during their preaching from one City to another, may well be understood literally: *Take no thought, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed.* Ver. 34; *Take no thought, no, not so much as for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*

BUT when the words are considered as a general direction, to *all* Christians, at *all* times, and in *all*

circumstances ; then 'tis manifest they must be understood to be a caution against *such* Worldly Cares, as are inconsistent with *Our* Duty ; in like manner as to the Apostles, they were at that particular Time a prohibition of *All* Worldly Cares, as being inconsistent with *Their* Duty. The Professors of Christ's religion, must at *no* time, and in *no* circumstances, be so solicitous ; they must in *no* case be so anxious, about the affairs of the *present* Life, as to neglect the greater and more important Concerns of That which is *to come*. And *This* sense of the words is justified by the *Argument* our Saviour makes use of in the Context, ver. 24 ; *No man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other ; Ye cannot serve God and Mammon : Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on : That is, do not so take thought about these things, as to become Servants of Mammon, and forget your Duty towards your heavenly Master. St John in his first Epistle, ch. ii. 15, gives a like Exhortation ; Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the words of our Saviour, ver. 34 of this chapter ; Take no thought for the morrow ; as they might well be applied to the Apostles in the literal sense, during the time of their Mission ; so with regard to Christians in all Ages, (the word, *morrow*, signifying *figuratively* the indefinite uncertain future time of man's life,) they may very reasonably, (according to the forementioned Argument drawn by our Lord from the impossibility of serving both God and Mammon,) they may very reasonably be understood *only* as a Prohibition of That Care*

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of the *World*, which he himself elsewhere describes, (*Matt. xiii. 22.*) as *choaking the word*, so that it *becometh unfruitful*: It being indeed very natural for worldly and ambitious minds, continually to enlarge their Prospect of *the morrow*, and to extend their Hopes and Designs from one uncertain indeterminate time to another; 'till Death unexpected blasts all their Thoughts at once, and surprizes them unfruitful of any Works of Righteousness. Which Folly is very affectionately reproved by our Saviour in the Parable of the Rich man, who was blessing himself in the vain Thoughts of his *Stores laid up for many years, that very night when his Soul was required of him.*

II. Secondly, I OBSERVE that the words of the Text, when considered as a *general Command to all Christians*, are very reasonably to be understood in this greater *latitude* of signification; because, if we attend to the connexion of the whole sentence in this and the following verses, we shall find the expression to be, not *absolute*, but *comparative*. *Take no Thought* (says our Lord) *what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink*; — but *seek ye first, or principally*, (in St Luke 'tis, *seek ye rather*) *the Kingdom of God*. Now, according to the Analogy of the *Jewish* language, *Two Sentences* connected in this manner by way of opposition, are in sense the same *only*, as if it had been said in *One*; *Be more careful to attain the Kingdom of God, than the Conveniencies of this present Life.*

THERE are in Scripture *Many* very remarkable Expressions of this kind.

IN the *Old Testament*, Mal. i. 2, 3. *Jacob have I loved*, says God, *and Esau have I hated*. The Propositions are not to be understood asunder, but to be taken together as *One*; *Jacob have I loved more than*

Esau. For God did not intend to express *Hatred* towards *Esau*; but only to love *Jacob* comparatively with a greater Love. Again, *Jer.* vii. 22; *I spake* Not unto your *Fathers*, nor commanded them, in the day that *I brought them out of the Land of Egypt*, concerning *Burnt-offerings* or *Sacrifices*: but *This thing commanded I them*, saying, *Obey my Voice*. The two parts of this sentence of the Prophet, are not to be taken separately, as if he affirmed that God did not require *Burnt-offerings at all*; (for 'tis certain he *did* command them in most express words in the Law;) but the whole is to be understood together, that God did not *insist upon Burnt-Offerings so much*, as upon Obedience to the Commandments of the *moral Law*. There is a like expression, *Hos.* vi. 6; *I desired Mercy*, and not *Sacrifice*. The meaning is not, that God did not require *Sacrifice*; but that he desired *Mercy rather than Sacrifice*, (and as it follows in the very next words,) *the Knowledge of the Lord more than Burnt-Offerings*.

IN the *New Testament*, the same manner of expression, agreeable to the nature of the *Jewish* language, is likewise frequently used; and 'tis necessary to be taken notice of, in order to the true Understanding of several Passages. *Job.* xvii. 9; *I pray not for the world*, says our Saviour, *but for them which thou hast given me*. His meaning is; not, that he did not at all desire the Conversion and Salvation of the *Whole World*; but that his principal and particular Regard, in the Petitions he was at This time putting up, was towards those who at present actually believed on his Name. Again, in his Discourse with the Woman of *Canaan*; *Matt.* xv. 24: *I am not sent*, says he, *but to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*. The meaning is not absolute, (as might seem from the first part of the

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the sentence,) that he was *not* sent *at all* to any others than the *Jews* only ; but that he was not sent *so soon*, *so immediately*, *so principally* ; his mission was not to be made known *so early*, to any other nation, as to the *lost Sheep of the house of Israel*. For, that he *was* also, in process of time, to be a light to lighten the *Gentiles*, as well as to be the glory of his people *Israel*, the Scriptures of the Prophets expressly enough declared ; and our Saviour himself in this very place sufficiently intimates, when immediately after That seeming Refusal, yet he effectually granted this Stranger's request, by healing the infirmity of her daughter. And in his instructions to his Disciples, ch. x. 5 ; he speaks with less obscurity : *Go not into the way of the Gentiles ;—but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Which afterwards was still more clearly express'd ; *Acts* xiii. 46 ; *It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to the Jews, but afterwards to the Gentiles.*

IN St Paul's Epistles, there are many Instances of the like manner of speaking. *1 Tim.* ii. 14 ; *Adam was not deceived, but the Woman being deceived was in the transgression :* His Meaning is not to say, that *Adam* was not deceived *at all* ; but that the *Woman* being *first* deceived, began the transgression. *1 Cor.* vi. 12 ; *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient :* He never intended to affirm, that all Actions were lawful ; but that of those Actions which were confessedly lawful, yet it did not follow that they were All expedient. In the same epistle, ch. i. 17 ; *Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel :* He does not mean absolutely, that he was not to baptize at all ; but that his proper and peculiar Office, was not so much to baptize men with his own hands, as to
preach

preach the Gospel to them in order to their conversion. To mention but One place more; *Rom. vi. 17; God be thanked*, says he, *that ye were the Servants of Sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart That Form of Doctrine which was delivered you.* According to the manner of speaking in modern languages, it must needs seem a very strange and unusual expression; *God be thanked, that ye were the Servants of Sin*: But in the Jewish Idiom it was very intelligible, that the two parts of the sentence should be taken as One: *God be thanked*, for that ye, who Formerly were *the Servants of Sin*, have Now obeyed from the Heart *That Form of Doctrine which was delivered you.*

AND thus therefore likewise in the words of the Text; if the connexion of the whole be considered, and the two parts of the Sentence be united in one; (*Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, — but seek ye first the Kingdom of God*) the sense, 'tis very clear, will be *comparative*, and amount only to This: Be not so solicitous for the things of this present life as to neglect the more important Concerns of That which is *to come*: But let your *principal* and *chief* Care be to secure your *eternal* Interest; and the Blessing of Providence upon your ordinary industry, will provide you such a proportion of *temporal* accommodations, as he shall see best and most expedient for you. In some particular cases, God has given extraordinary Examples of this kind: As in the instance of Solomon, *1 Kings iii. 11; God said unto him, Because thou hast — not asked for thy self — riches, — nor — the life of thine enemies, but — Understanding to discern judgment; Behold I have — given thee a wise and an understanding heart; — and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both Riches and Honour.*

Honour. Our Saviour does not promise any thing of this nature to his Disciples, because his Kingdom is not of this world. But a *competency* of temporal Blessings he encourages them to expect *shall be added unto them*; always excepting the case of persecution, to which is annexed a Promise of peculiar Rewards.

III. *Thirdly*; I OBSERVE further, that the Precept in the Text, when considered as a *general* Command to *all* Christians, appears plainly intended to be understood with some latitude, from the *Reason* assigned by our Lord in the very words themselves, *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. Take no Thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink*; For, *after all these things do the Gentiles seek.* The thing therefore here prohibited by our Lord to *His* Disciples, is *such* a solicitude after the affairs of the World, as the *Gentiles* have, who *knew not God*; who have neither a right Sense of the *Providence* of God, in disposing of all *temporal* things here upon *earth*; nor That certain expectation, which the Gospel has given us, of an *eternal* Kingdom hereafter in the *Heavens*. These men, (excepting some few Noble Spirits among them, of whom the World was not worthy;) the generality of them lived according to that Epicurean Maxim, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*; placing the whole of their happiness in such enjoyments, as they possessed in common with the Beasts that perish. Which gratifications of sense, our Saviour commanded *His* Disciples to have no regard for, *comparatively* with their Care for the Concerns of Eternity.

IV. *Fourthly* and *Lastly*; THAT the words of the Text, when applied to *all Christians in general*, are not to be understood in the strict and *literal* Sense, but in That *comparative* manner I have now explained;
appears

appears further from the *additional reason* subjoined by our Saviour in the *last clause* : *For your heavenly Father knoweth, that ye have need of all these things.* Our heavenly Father's knowing that we have need of all these things, is not a reason against our taking Thought for them in *That method* of Labour and honest Industry, by which he himself, who knows that we have need of them, has appointed them to be obtained ; but 'tis a reason only against such solicitude about them, as implies either a *Dis trusting* of his Providence, or the not having a right sense of it, or not making a just acknowledgment of it in all things. The manner of our Saviour's arguing in this particular, is exactly parallel to the directions we find him giving in This very chapter, concerning Prayer. Ver. 7 ; *Ye, says he, when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking : Be not ye therefore like unto Them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.* The expression is very nearly the same as in the words of the Text, *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.* Yet in the very next words, ver. 9, he instructs them how they should pray for those very things, their want of which, he had just told them, God perfectly knew before-hand : *After This manner (says he) pray ye ; Our Father which art in Heaven,—give us this day our daily Bread.* As therefore our Saviour in his instructions about Prayer, by telling his Disciples that their heavenly Father knows what things they have need of, before they ask him ; does not encourage them to forbear Praying at all, but directs them to pray in such a manner as is most proper to express their just Acknowledgment of Him, and entire Dependance upon Him, whom they know to be before-

before-hand perfectly acquainted with all their Wants : So in the *Text* likewise, by telling us that our Father knows *we have need of all these things*, 'tis plain he does not mean to encourage us (in general and ordinary cases) to neglect the usual and natural means of providing for our Subsistence ; but only (as I before observed) forbids *such* a Sollicitude about Worldly Affairs, as implies either a *Dis trusting* of God's Providence, or the not having a right *Sense* of it, or not making a just *acknowledgment* of it in all things. A Disciple of Christ, must have it constantly and habitually impress'd upon his Mind, that 'tis our *heavenly Father* who continually supplies us with necessaries, for the *Preservation* of that Being which he at first *Gave* us : That 'tis *He* who causes His *Sun* to rise, and sends us *Rain* and fruitful *Seasons*, filling our *Hearts* with Food and Gladness : That 'tis *He* who (in the Psalmist's expression) maketh the *Grass* to grow upon the mountains ; giving even to the *Beast* his food, and to the young *Ravens* which cry ; and filling all things *Living*, with plenteousness : Or, as our Saviour himself describes it still more sublimely, in the words just before my *Text* ; *Behold* (says he) *the Fowls of the Air* ; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into *Barns* ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth Them : And, consider the *Lilies of the Field* ; — they toil not, neither do they spin ; And yet I say unto you, that even *Solomon* in all his glory was not arrayed like one of Them : Wherefore if God so clothe the *grass of the Field*, which *to day* is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith ? What men careless and ignorant of the Truth, usually and vulgarly style *Natural Causes*, are indeed nothing but mere inanimate *Instruments* in the hands of God ; and the *Course of Nature*, as 'tis commonly called, is, in the truth and reality of things, a mere empty *Name*, any otherwise

otherwise than as signifying, by an abstract way of speaking, the *regularity* of *His* Operations who made and governs all things. 'Tis *He alone* therefore, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; even all *those* things, which, in a vulgar and careless way of speaking, we usually ascribe to *natural* and *inanimate Causes*. Which very same Causes, whensoever he pleases, he can make to be the Instruments of our *Punishment* as well as of our *Support*. He can (as *Moses* elegantly expresses it; he can) *make the Heavens to be Brass, and the Earth Iron*: He can *scorch* with Drought, or *drown* with Moisture, or *blast* with unwholsome Winds, in order to destroy with Famine, and *make a fruitful land barren for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein*: Or, without removing the *Blessings themselves* of Nature, he can at any time withdraw the *Benefit* and the *Effect* of them. For *man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God*; that is, by *His* Blessing upon the instruments of Nature. Which Blessing whensoever he pleases to withdraw, and *with Rebukes doth chasten man for Sin, he maketh his Beauty to consume away, as it were a Moth fretting a garment*; Ps. xxxix. 11. Without the divine Blessing therefore, all Care, all Labour, all Industry is in vain; nay, even the very *Possession* of all temporal good things, will afford no enjoyment. But *They* who, by seeking with their first and chief care the righteousness of God's Kingdom, have secured to themselves *His Favour* and Blessing, may safely depend and rely upon his Providence, that he who feeds the *Fowls of the Air*, and clothes even the *Lilies of the Field*, will much more take care of *Them*. Not in the way of *idleness* and *sloth*: For *similitudes* are not to be applied *literally*: But, in proportion to the natures of the things compared,

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he who provides for the *Fowls of the Air* and the *Lilies of the Field* in a way suitable to *Their* nature, will much more provide for *Men* in a way suitable to *Ours* ; Either after a *super-natural* manner, in such *extraordinary* cases as was that of the Apostles Mission to preach the Gospel ; or else, in *ordinary* Cases, by the *natural* means of Labour and Industry, whereby God has appointed that the Earth shall bring forth her increase. In the Use of which means, 'tis our Duty to rely upon Providence for his Blessing on the Effect. *If any would not work, says St Paul, neither should he eat :* And yet the same Author exhorts, *Pbil. iv. 6. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God.* This is taking Thought for the Things of the World, not as the *Gentiles* who know not God, but as those who consider that our *heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things.*

SERMON II.

Of Forgiveness of Injuries.

EPHES. iv. 32. latter part.

Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.

TIS the constant Method of St Paul in all his Epistles, after he has finished the *particular* Subject upon occasion of which the Epistle was written, to add in the close of his Discourse such *general* exhortations to the practice of Virtue, as might be of Use, not only in *That Age*, and to *That particular Church* to which the Epistle was written, but to *all Christians at all times and in all places*; and might most effectually secure them against all such corruptions either in Faith or Practice, as he foresaw would be of the worst consequence in hindring the great Ends of the Gospel of Christ. The Great and Principal Design of the Gospel, is to reconcile men to *God*, and to *each Other*: to establish in the World, upon the Foundation of a just regard to *God*, universal Peace and Love and Good-Will amongst *Men*. The most dangerous Evil, and most destructive of this great Design of Christianity, is mens suffering their *Passions* and *worldly Views* to intermix with their Religion. By which means, the

very things which Religion was chiefly intended to *prevent*, are, among ignorant and deluded men, following their *Passions* instead of their reason, promoted principally by what they take to be a strong Concern for Religion itself. Hence *the Salt*, (as our Saviour in a most lively comparison expresses this matter;) *the Salt, wherewith things should be seasoned*, does itself lose its Savour. Hence *the Light*, (as he in another place most significantly expresses the same thing;) *the very Light which is in men*, becomes *Darkness*: And *Satan*, on the contrary, is hereby transformed into an *Angel of Light*. From whence (says the Apostle St James) come wars and fightings among you? that is, hatred, contentions and animosities among Christians? Come they from any real and serious Concern, for the Honour of God or for the Welfare of Mankind? No, saith he; but from your Lusts that war in your members; that is, from your Passions and Worldly Views. This being so great and dangerous an Evil, and yet so very apt to spread among all Parties of Men; there is therefore no exhortation so often repeated, so perpetually inculcated, so constantly and earnestly pressed, in all the Books of the *New Testament*; as upon *This Head*, of the obligation Christians are under to promote universal Love and Good-Will amongst Men. With *This* the Apostle St Paul begins the chapter, whereof my Text is a part: ver. 1; *I therefore the Prisoner of the Lord beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. Arguments and Motives to *This*, he proceeds to alledge throughout the *Whole chapter*, And with *This* he at the end concludes, ver. 30; *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby*

ye are sealed unto the day of redemption: Let all bitterness and wrath. and anger and clamour and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

IN discoursing more particularly upon which *last* words; *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*: I shall endeavour to show, 1st, that good Christians *have their past Sins forgiven*; and that the original Ground and Motive of that Forgiveness, is the *Goodness of God: God has forgiven you.* 2^{dly}, That the *particular Method*, in which the Goodness of God has thought fit to manifest itself in this Forgiveness of Sin, is through the *intercession of Christ: God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.* 3^{dly}, That the *Condition* of this Forgiveness thro' Christ, is the Supposition of *such a Repentance*, the Fruit and Evidence whereof is our *Readiness to forgive each other: Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*

1st and 2^d; THE *Two first* of these, I shall consider *Together*: That good Christians *have their past Sins forgiven*; that the *original Ground or Motive* of that Forgiveness, is the essential and eternal *Goodness of God*; and that *the particular Method*, in which the Goodness of God has thought fit to manifest itself in this Forgiveness of Sin, is *through the intercession of Christ*. The Duty of rational creatures, who are made capable of discerning between Good and Evil, is to obey at all times the Commands of God. And whensoever they knowingly and presumptuously transgress against the Light he was given them, the natural and just Punishment of such Transgression is Death. Even upon *innocent Beings*, who may be supposed never to have transgressed at all,

God is under *no obligation* to bestow *immortality*. For He who has Power over all, may, without wrong to Any, do what he pleases with his own; and That *Life*, which to all the intelligent Beings in the Universe is originally his Free Gift, he may freely continue to any of them for what portion of time he pleases, and when their appointed period is run out, and they have enjoyed the Effects of his bountiful Goodness in their proper Share of Being, he may, even *without* consideration of Sin, *again* as freely take it away. *Much more*, when rational Beings have *rebelled* against him, by presumptuously transgressing the Laws of everlasting righteousness; may he justly cut them short in displeasure, and by an exemplary Sentence of righteous judgment, inflict upon them the *Punishment of Death*. For, what our Saviour declares in a *particular* case, that God could easily, if he pleased, destroy the whole nation of the impenitent *Jews*, and *raise up*, even out of the *Stones* of the Street, *children unto Abraham*; is no less true *universally*, that God can at any time destroy with exemplary Judgments *Any disobedient Creatures*, and create to himself *Others*, with the same ease as he did *Them* at first, to undergo a new Probation of obedience. Nevertheless, from the consideration of the divine *Goodness*, they who have formerly been disobedient, and are now convinced of the unreasonableness of being so, and are sincerely resolved to do what is right for the future; find a reasonable ground and foundation of *Hope*, that God, in his great Forbearance, will still make a further Trial of *Them*, and accept instead of Innocence their sincere Amendment. And This, which, in the Arguments of Nature, is *but* Hope; is, in the declarations of the Gospel, an assured Promise; that if a Sinner forsakes his unrighteous ways, and does for the Future
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That which is lawful and right, he *shall* save his Soul alive. The *original Ground* or *Motive* of this Forgiveness, is the essential *Goodness of God*. For He who has Power over all, may remit as much of his own Right as he pleases; and This, upon what Terms and Conditions he himself alone, who is under no controul, shall in his own divine wisdom think fit to appoint and to accept. For if, even in *Human* Judicatures, a Judge is not to condemn, or to acquit, according to the Affections or Expectations of the Spectators, but according to his own more perfect Knowledge of the Law and of the *Fact*; much more is it reasonable that *God*, whose Judgment is unerring, and his Knowledge infallible, should *have mercy on whom he will have mercy*; and *compassion*; not arbitrarily, but *on whom he himself sees it fit to have compassion*. By *original Right* therefore, *God may* appoint what Terms of Forgiveness he pleases. In *Fact*, the Method wherein the divine Goodness *has* thought fit *actually* to manifest itself in the Forgiveness of Sin, is *thro' the intercession of Christ*. *God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you*. Not that *God*, who, by the essential Rectitude of his Nature, acts always according to perfect Right and Reason; can be any way *changed*, or have any *affection moved* in him, by the interposition of any Intercessor whatsoever: But that, being *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, and intending to show the greatest possible discountenance to Sin in the very Method of forgiving it, he thought fit to annex the *Declarations of Pardon* to the *Death of the Mediator*. And therefore the words in the Text, which we render, *God for Christ's sake has forgiven you*; are in the Original more accurate and expressive, *God hath forgiven you In Christ*; that is, he has in the dispensation and by the Terms of the Gospel of Christ, declared his acceptance

ceptance of your Repentance. From this consideration, 'tis easy to give a satisfactory Answer to the Principal and most Material Objection of Unbelievers; who, in opposition to the Great Doctrine of the Gospel, alledge, that God being always necessarily Omnipresent, and consequently *himself* at all times ready to hear the Prayers of all men, therefore there could be no need of appointing any *Mediator*; and that God being of himself essentially in his nature, always disposed to do what is right and fit, therefore his Purposes can no way be changed by the interposition of any *Intercessor*: To This objection, I say, 'tis easy, from what has been said, to give a just and sufficient Answer. For the Design of a Mediator or Intercessor being appointed with God, was not as if God could be moved, as mortal men are, by *persuasion* to do what otherwise he would not have thought right to be done: But the Design of it was, that God would testify his Hatred and Indignation against Sin, by consigning the Pardon of it thro' the Blood of the *Mediator*. From hence also it appears, that as on the one hand the *intercession of Christ* is not at all of the less value, because the eternal and essential *Goodness of God* was the original Ground or Motive of our obtaining Forgiveness thro' that *intercession*; so neither on the other hand is the *Goodness of God* less to be acknowledged, or the Pardon of Sin less *Free*, because the *Method* in which God was pleased to manifest this Free Goodness, was through the *intercession of Christ*. For he, who, in voluntary compliance with his Father's good pleasure, laid down his life for the Redemption and Salvation of Men; did *himself* love us, and give himself for us, a ransom and propitiation for Sin. And at the same time, He, who having Power over all, was pleased to appoint and to accept on our behalf this intercession of his Son;

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may with as much Truth be affirmed to have forgiven us *Freely*, of his own *Grace and Goodness*, as if he had done it *without* any intercession at all. The Scripture always expresses this matter accurately, with great and exact distinctness, and with high acknowledgment of the original and essential *Goodness* of the God and Father of all. Our Saviour himself, *Job. iii. 16*; God (says he) *so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And the Apostle St John in like manner in his 1st epistle, *ch. iv. 9*; *In This*, says he, *was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him.*

AND This is a sufficient Explication of the *two first particulars* I proposed to discourse upon from the Text; that good Christians *have their past Sins forgiven*; that the *original Ground or Motive* of That Forgiveness, is the *Goodness of God*; and that the *particular Method*, in which the Goodness of God has thought fit to manifest itself in this Forgiveness of Sin, is *through the intercession of Christ.* The

Third and last Observation was, that the *Condition* of this Forgiveness thro' Christ, is the *Supposition of such a Repentance*, the Fruit and Evidence whereof is our *Readiness to forgive each other: Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.* In all Promises of Pardon, there is always, either express'd or understood, a *Supposition of Repentance.* And by *Repentance*, is always meant, not a *bare Sorrow for Sin*; (for, *That* there cannot but be, even in the *Place of Torment*;) but by *True Repentance*, is always meant, an *actual Forsaking and Amending* of the Fault repented of. And not *That* only in particular; but it includes also

also that there be *in general* such a disposition of Mind, as *becomes* a penitent and forgiven Sinner: A disposition of Mind, *desirous* to show forth the Sincerity of its Repentance by the Thankful Expressions of an *universal Obedience*, and by *imitation* of Him whom we adore for having forgiven us. One principal part of which imitation, is our being ready, upon all reasonable occasions, to forgive Others, even as He has freely forgiven Us. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against Any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*; Col. iii. 13. And *Ephes. v. 2*; *Walk in love, as Christ also has loved Us, and bath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour. To God himself, who is infinitely self-sufficient to his own Happiness, we are capable of making no Recompence, no Return, for all the Benefits that he has done unto us: And therefore he is pleased to accept our kind and charitable behaviour towards each other, as a Regard paid immediately to Him; and he requires it of us, as the most proper and suitable Expression of our having a due Sense of His mercy and goodness towards us all. If thy Brother trespass against thee, says our Saviour, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him: And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him: Luke xvii. 4. Nay, St Matthew adds, not until seven times only, but until seventy times seven; ch. xviii. 22. Nay, our Saviour carries this matter still further; and, in imitation of God, who is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, he commands, us Matt. v. 44, to Love even our Enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us. Which Argument the Apostle St Peter en-*

force

forces from the example likewise of *Christ*; 1 *Pet.* iii. 9; *Not rendring evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise Blessing: As Christ did; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously,* 1 *Pet.* ii. 23. The *Meaning* of all these and the like Precepts, is; *not* that *Christian Magistrates* are to neglect the punishing of *Malefactors*; *not* that *Private Christians* are to forbear bringing *publick Offenders* to Justice; *not* that it is not lawful for men to recover their *private just Dues* by such *Methods of Law and Equity*, as are in wise and *Christian Countries* appointed for the administration of Justice; nor, lastly, that in *common life*, we are in *such a sense* to *forgive* those who continue to wrong us, as that we needlessly and carelessly *trust* them, and as it were *tempt* them to wrong us *more*: But we are to forgive, until seventy times seven, (that is, perpetually,) those who *do repent*: And those who do *not repent*, but *persist* in injuring us, we are to *pray for*, and be willing to do acts of *charity and humanity* to them when need requires; and not be solicitous for *Revenge*, but much rather to desire their *Amendment*, and by all reasonable Means promote reconciliation: And if at any time we are forced by the necessity of things, to have recourse to the *Magistrate* to do us right; we are even *then* to desire *only Equity* for ourselves, and not *vexation* and *needless damage* to our *Adversary*: In a word; 'tis the Duty of the Disciples of *Christ*, to have in *general* a *kind and charitable disposition*; dealing with *Others* in all cases, and in all Circumstances, as we desire and in our daily Petitions are taught to pray, that God would be pleased to deal with *Us*.

IN *This* sense, and according to *This* explication of the nature and limitations of the Duty of Forgiveness, the *Practice* of it may be enforced upon all *reasonable* persons by many *strong Arguments* and most *powerful Motives*. 'Tis *equitable* in the *nature of things*, that men conscious of their own Frailness, sensible of their own Weaknesses and Passions, and of their Aptness to be too soon and too often provoked; should be very ready to forgive and be reconciled to *Others*, considering (as the Apostle St Paul argues upon another occasion; considering) *Themselves*, lest They also be tempted. 'Tis *desirable* for the *inward Peace and Ease* of mens own Minds *within themselves*, that they should not be under the Power of *fretful Passions*, and the *lasting Resentments* of a revengeful Spirit; but that they be meek and gentle, peaceable and easy to be reconciled: Which Sweetness of Disposition, improved upon religious Principles into a Habit of Meekness, is a Virtue reflecting upon itself; That calm and sedate Satisfaction, which is in a *peculiar manner* a Reward to itself. Nor is it less *beneficial* to the *Publick*; as being the great *Preservative* against that *Beginning of Strife*, which Solomon elegantly compares to the *letting out Water*, Prov. xvii. 14; that is, 'tis the Opening of a Breach which no man can be sure to stop, before it proceeds to the fatallest and most calamitous events. Upon which account, excellent is the Advice of the Author of the Book of Eccles, ch. xix. 13; *Admonish a friend; it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admonish thy friend; it may be he hath not said it, and if he have, that he speak it not again.—There is one that slippereth in his Speech, but not from his heart; and who is he that hath not offended with his Tongue?*

T H E R E

THERE is, further, another Motive to the Practice of this Duty, urged by the Apostle St Paul; that it is really the most effectual way, finally and upon the whole, of doing ourselves right; Rom. xii. 19; *Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves;—for 'tis written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord: Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of Fire on his Head: Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good.* The Meaning is: Gentleness and Meekness and easiness to forgive, is the most probable way of working upon men, if they be at all reasonable and capable of Amendment; and if on the contrary they be altogether incorrigible, then 'tis the certain and effectual Means of having God finally judge our cause. That This Phrase, *heaping coals of Fire upon his Head*, signifies the Judgments of God falling finally upon those, who maliciously and incorrigibly persist in oppressing such Meek and charitable persons, as never give them any just provocation; is evident from the preceeding words, *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord*: And from the manner in which the whole Passage is express'd in the place from whence St Paul cites it, Prov. xxv. 21; *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward Thee*: And from the other passages of Scripture, in which the very same phrase is used; Ps. cxi. 10; *Let burning coals fall upon them*; And Is. xlvii. 14; (according to the Version of the lxx,) *They shall be as stubble, the Fire shall burn them;—for thou hast coals of fire to heap upon them*: And 2 Esdr. xvi. 53; *Let not the Sinner say that he hath not sinned; for God shall burn coals of fire upon His head, who saith*

before the Lord God and his glory, I have not sinned.

BUT, to draw towards a conclusion. The *last* and *most powerful Motive* to the Practice of the Duty before us, is the Argument urged in the Text; that God expects and requires it of us in the Conditions of the Gospel, that we should *forgive one another, even as He, for Christ's sake, has forgiven Us.* The Reasonableness of the condition, is well expressed by the Author of the book of Eccles, ch. xxviii. 1; *He that revengeth, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his Sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he has done thee; so shall Thy Sins also be forgiven when thou prayest.* One man beareth Hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a Man which is like himself; and doth he ask forgiveness of his Own Sins? What is here argued as equitable in the nature of the Thing, is by the Apostle declared to be the Condition of the Gospel; Jam. ii. 13; *He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against Judgment.* Our Lord himself in That Prayer which he taught his Disciples, commanded them to say; *Forgive Us Our Trespases*, in like manner as we forgive them that trespass against Us: And at the conclusion of the Prayer, he enlarges upon the reason of that petition; For (says he) *if ye forgive men Their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.* The same thing he inculcates in the parable of the King, who having forgiven a Servant ten thousand Talents, revoked the Favour again, upon that Servant's refusing to forgive his fellow-servant one hundred pence, Matt. xviii. 33; *shouldst not thou also have had compassion*

sion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?
Nay, so far does our Saviour carry this matter, as to
advise, *Matt. v. 23; If thou bring thy gift to the altar,*
and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against
thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy
way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and
offer thy gift.

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SERMON III.

Of the Nature and End of the *Sabbath.*

M A R. ii. 27.

And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath.

IT is very remarkable in the whole History of our Saviour, that in all cases where neither any *natural necessity* nor *moral obligation* intervened to the contrary, *there* he was constantly most exact and nice, in fulfilling every particular even of the ceremonial Law. Thus when he came to *John the Baptist*; though, having no Sin, he had no need of the Baptism of Repentance; and *John* accordingly forbade him, saying, *I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to Me?* yet he insisted upon it, saying, *Suffer it to be so Now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all Righteousness*; Matt. iii. 15. But, on the contrary, *where-ever* any real necessity of nature, or any moral obligation, any work of Goodness, Mercy or Charity, came in competition; *there* he was always as zealous, that the work of Goodness or Charity

should take place of *any positive rite or ceremony* whatsoever. Thus when the Pharisees reproached him, for conversing familiarly with, and instructing, persons legally unclean; he replies, *Matt. ix. 13; Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice.* And when the Ruler of the Synagogue reviled him for healing a diseased person upon the Sabbath-day, and maliciously represented it to the people as a Breach of the Command given to keep That day Holy; he answers him, *Luke xiii. 15; Thou Hypocrite, Dost not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his Ox or his Ass from the Stall, and lead him away to watering? and ought not this Woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this Bond on the Sabbath-day?* And, in the History which occasioned the words of my Text; when the Pharisees were angry at Jesus's Disciples, for plucking a few ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day, *Mar. ii. 24;* our Lord answers them by giving an Instance out of the History of the *Old Testament*, by which it appeared that in all times even under the Law, all *merely ritual and ceremonial institutions* always gave place to the *just and real Necessities* of Life. Immediately after which, he adds in the words of the Text, as a *general Ground or Reason* of the thing itself, whereof he had just before alledged an *Instance in Practice*; *The Sabbath, saith he, was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath.* That is: Duties of a *ritual* nature, and of *positive* appointment only, do not, like those *Moral Virtues*, which are of *intrinsic, eternal, and unalterable* obligation, indispensably oblige in *all Cases* and in *all Circumstances* whatsoever; but were appointed of God, only for the present Use of Man, to be subservient and assisting
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to the more convenient Practice of the Great Duties of Religion.

FROM these words therefore of our Saviour, I shall in the following Discourse consider the *Nature and Ends* of the *original institution* of the Sabbath, and *to what Degrees and Purposes* it still continues obligatory among *Christians*. In general: As 'tis absolutely necessary in the first Foundation of Religion, that we know distinctly *Whom* we are to worship, and in *what manner*; so 'tis necessary likewise in the Nature of things, that some *Portion of Time* be allowed for *instructing* ourselves in the *Knowledge* of our Duty, and for the *Practice* peculiarly of That especial part of it, which consists in the *publick Acknowledgment* and solemn *Worship* of God. And *berein* consists the *general Morality* of the Sabbath, and the *eternal reason* of its having perpetually a place among the unalterable Commandments of the Moral Law. For as necessary as it is, that *Religion* should be *at all* preserved in the World, so necessary it is that *some Time* should be set apart for mens *instruction* in the *Will* of God, and for their *solemnizing* his *Worship*.

BUT to be *more distinct* and *particular*: The *Ends* for which the Sabbath was *Originally* instituted, and for which the Command was from time to time *renewed*; were principally as follows.

1st; THAT men might continually commemorate the works of *Creation*, and, acknowledging the *One True God* and *Author of all things*, might praise him perpetually for the things that he has made. *Rev. iv. 11*; The *Worship* paid to God in *Heaven* is thus represented to *St John* in his Vision; The whole multitude of the heavenly host fall down before him that sits on the Throne, saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; For thou hast created all things,*

things, and for thy Pleasure they Are, and were created. This is the employment of Saints and Angels, in the eternal Sabbath in Heaven; And that, upon Earth, the Praises of God may be celebrated on the same account, is the original Foundation of the institution of the Sabbath. Gen. ii. 3; *And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.* Which reason is again repeated, *Exod. xx. 11; For in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it.* 'Tis here to be observed, that the word, *rested*, is by no means to be understood *literally*, as if the Creating of things had been any *Pains* or *Labour* to God: For 'tis *absurd*, that any thing should give any *Trouble* to *Omnipotence*. By the Word of the Lord were the *Heavens* made, and all the *Host* of them by the *Breatb* of his *Mouth*; He spake the word, and they were made; he commanded, and they stood fast. The Meaning is: He made them all with as great *Ease*, as if it had been no *Action* at all, but merely a word speaking. His *Resting* therefore after it, is (I say) by no means to be understood *literally*; But God's *resting*, signifies merely, that the things were *finished* which he intended to make at That time, and that he *Then* proceeded no further. Likewise, things being made in *six days*, is not, that there was any thing in the Nature of Things, which *required* That *Space* of Time for their Production. For the Production of Things in *six days*, is as *miraculous*, as the producing of them in *one single moment*; and the producing of them in *one moment*, had been just as easy to God, as the creating them in *six days*. But 'tis only for the sake of *Our* greater *distinctness* of Conception, that things were digested in That particular Order and

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Portion of Time. And our perpetual Returns of Praises to God for the things that he has made, offered up to him every Sabbath, are a *Mark* or distinguishing Character of the Worshippers of the True God ; a declaration or continual professing of ourselves to be Servants of the One Almighty and True God, the Father or Author of all things, the Maker of Heaven and Earth : in opposition to the Infidelity of Atheists, the Superstition of Polytheists, and the irreligious Worship of all the idolatrous Nations of the Earth. *Exod. xxxi. 13, 17 ; Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep ; For it is a Sign between Me and You, — that ye may know that I am the Lord ; — It is a Sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever ; For in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth.* Of ignorant and profane men, Some have imagined the World to exist by Necessity of Nature ; not considering, that in what arises from necessity, there can be no variety or distinction : And these persons, cannot but be totally void of all Religion. Others, have fancied the World to have been framed originally by mere Chance ; not considering that Chance is nothing, and can do nothing, being a mere empty Word or Sound : And these likewise, must needs be absolutely without Religion. Others, have persuaded themselves, that the Sun, Moon, and Stars, were Gods, or the Habitations of Gods, or the Powers that governed the World : And These were the idolatrous Worshippers of the Host of Heaven. Concerning which Crime, *Job* thus expresses himself with his accustomed Eloquence, *ch. xxxi. 26 ; If I beheld the Sun when it shined, or the Moon walking in brightness ; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my Mouth hath kiss'd my hand ; This also were an iniquity to be punished by the Judge, for I should have denied the God that is above.* The Great Preservative against every Fault of
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this kind, either *idolatrous* or *atheistical*; is the consideration that the *Whole Universe*, and *all things therein contained*, are the *Creation* of God; That the *Moon and Stars themselves*, are all of them the *work* of his bands; and that 'tis our *heavenly Father* which *causeth* His Sun (so our Saviour emphatically expresses it) he *causeth* His Sun to *shine on the Evil and on the Good*, and *sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust*. This is, what even by *Reason itself* may be strictly proved, to those who are capable of attending to it: *His eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly seen by the things that are made*; Rom. i. 20. By *Revelation*, the same Great Truth is clearly confirmed to persons of all Capacities. And the first institution of the *Sabbath*, was on purpose, that men periodically celebrating the *Creation of God*, might thereby be preserved from *irreligion and idolatry*. Deut. iv. 19; *Lest thou lift up thine eyes unto Heaven, and when thou seest the Sun and the Moon and the Stars, even all the Host of Heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all Nations under the whole Heaven*. This was the *Idolatry* Mankind was apt to run into, in the *early Ages* of the World; and it continues still among some *barbarous Nations* even at *This day*. But the *more prevailing Vice* in these *latter Ages*, among men of *corrupt Minds* in *civilized Nations*; are *Atheistical Notions*, of *Necessity, Fate, and Nature*. The proper Remedy against Both these Great Evils, of *Idolatry* and *Atheism*; is a serious consideration of the manifold *Wisdom* and *Excellency* of the *Works of God*, which show forth the *Praise and Glory* of their *Almighty Creator*. O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever. Ps. cxlviii. 3; Praise ye him, Sun and Moon; praise him, all ye Stars of Light; — Mountains and all Hills; — Beasts and

and all Cattle; —Fire and hail, snow and vapour, storms and wind fulfilling his Word. 'Tis a very elegant, and expressive Figure of Speech; to represent All, even inanimate creatures, as *Themselves* praising God; because the contemplation of them affords to reasonable Men, perpetual Grounds of Praising him. I have been the longer upon this *First* Head, because This *original* reason of the institution of the Sabbath, is of *eternal* and *unchangeable* Consideration.

2dly; ANOTHER reason, which was added upon occasion of *renewing* this institution to the *Jews*, was that they might *commemorate* their Deliverance out of the Land of *Egypt*, which to *That People* was as it were a *New Creation*. Deut. v. 15; *Remember that thou wast a Servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out thence by a stretched-out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.* This additional reason, was peculiar to the nation of the *Jews* only; and consequently so were the *additional Circumstances*, which were then annexed, with regard to the *Manner* of performing the Duty. Of which kind, was that *absolute* and *strict Rest* from every sort of *Work* whatsoever, which was a proper commemoration of their deliverance from that Great Bondage, wherein they had in an unparalleled manner been obliged to *work* and to *serve with rigour*. And because 'twas a Manifest Contempt of This Great Deliverance, and a *presumptuously wilful despising* of a plain Command of God, then immediately and expressly given to That people; therefore, however small the Offence may seem as to the *Matter* of it, yet (which is always the main Circumstance of aggravation,) it being altogether inexcusable in point of *wilful presumption*, the Man in the Wilderness who did but gather sticks upon
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the Sabbath-day, was by God's especial direction commanded to be put to death; *Num. xv. 35.* It was a presumptuous Contempt of That express part of the Command given at That time to That people, *Exod. xxxv. 3, 2;* *Ye shall kindle no Fire throughout your Habitations upon the Sabbath-day; whosoever doth work therein, shall be put to death.* But this rigorous exacting of an absolute and strict Rest, was, I have said, peculiar to the Nation of the Jews only: As is evident from the Reason before-mentioned, relating to their deliverance out of Egypt; and is still more clear from the words of St Paul, *Col. ii. 16;* *Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of the new-moon, or of the Sabbath-day; Which are a Shadow of things to come, but the Body (or Substance) is of Christ:* And from the words of our Saviour himself, immediately following the Text; *The Son of man, is Lord also of the Sabbath.*

3dly; ANOTHER additional Reason, upon renewing the institution of the Sabbath to the Jews; was, that Servants, and even Cattle appointed for Labour, might have a proportionable time of Rest. This reason is express'd in the fourth Commandment; And again more particularly, *Exod. xxiii. 12;* *that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the Son of thine handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed.* And This reason, is partly ceremonial, partly moral. So far as the Commandment of giving Rest to Servants, was a Memorial to the Israelites of their having been themselves Servants in Egypt; so far it was part of the ritual Law, and its obligation extends not to other Nations. But so far as the reason of the Commandment is founded in humanity, and is opposite to cruelty, severity and rigour; so far it is an eternal part of the moral Law, and continues to be of perpetual obligation. Unreasonable Severity, in exacting

acting from those under our Power, more than they are well able to perform; is for ever a Breach of this Commandment, and a Temper altogether inconsistent with the Spirit and Character of a good man. *A righteous man, saith the Scripture, regardeth the Life even of his Beast*; Prov. xii. 10. And 'tis not without its proper Significancy, in order to show men what Spirit and Temper they should be of; that God, in the giving of this Commandment, condescends to make mention even of *Cattle*; and that our Saviour assures us, that not a *Sparrow* falls to the ground, without the Notice of our Father which is in Heaven.

AND now from This Account of the *Reasons* of the original Institution, and of the repeated Renewals of the Command concerning the Sabbath; 'tis very easy to understand *how far* and in *what sense* it is a perpetual Commandment, and to *what Degrees* and *Purposes* it still continues obligatory among *Christians*.

THE *moral* Part of the Sabbath; that is, *so far* as it is a Commandment enjoying the virtue of *humanity*, or of allowing time to those who are under our Power, to *rest* from the *Labours* of their worldly employment; and *so far* as it is, according to the original reason of its institution in Paradise, *Gen. ii. 3*, a time set apart for the religious commemorating of God's work of Creation, and praising him for the things that he has made, and serving and worshipping him as the Maker of all things; this *moral* part (I say) of the Sabbath, is of *eternal* and *unchangeable* Obligation. For the solemn Publick Worship of God cannot possibly be performed, without particular Times be set apart for the performing it, and for the instructing men in the Knowledge of their Duty. The more carefully this is done, the more acceptable to God are our days of devotion.

And they who by the *habitual* Practice of Virtue, preserve *constantly* upon their Minds a Sense of God and Religion in *all* the actions of their Lives; may be truly said, in the *Christian* sense, to keep a *perpetual* Sabbath. Upon which Account, both the *Land of Canaan*, wherein the *Israelites* were to serve God *without fear, in business and righteousness before him all the days of their lives*; and the *heavenly Canaan*, whereof the other was but a Type; are by *St Paul* figuratively represented under the Notion of an eternal Sabbath or Rest to the people of God, in a very elegant Allusion: Without attending to which, there is considerable difficulty in understanding the manner both of his expression and argument: *Heb. iv. 3*; *Although* (saith he) *the works*, the works of Creation, *were finished from the foundation of the World*, — and God did rest the seventh day from all his works; yet This was not the True Sabbath, (but only, as he elsewhere expresses it, *Col. ii. 17*; *it was a shadow of things to come*;) The True Sabbath or Rest, to the people of the *Jews*, was their entering into the *Promised Land*, and *Therein* resting for ever from the labours they had undergone in *Egypt* and in the *Wilderness*: And This, he tells us, is the sense of the word, *Rest*, in those places, where God threatned and sware to the unbelieving *Israelites*, *that they should not enter into his Rest*: *ch. iii. 11, 18*. But then still he goes on, and tells us further, that even This final Rest of Theirs, *the promised Land itself*: even This also was still but a Type of a further and better Rest, even the *eternal Sabbath in Heaven*: For if *Joshua*, says he, (*ch. iv. 8, 7*,) *had given them Rest*, then would not the Scripture afterward have spoken of another day, as it does in *David*, saying *Again, To day, after so long a time. There remaineth therefore* (infers the Apostle,) *there remaineth still a further Rest* (or

(or Sabbath) to the People of God, ver. 9; that is, an eternal Rest in Heaven, from Sin, and from Temptation, and from all Misery. For so he goes on, *ych* 10; *For He that is entred into his Rest, He also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His: Let us labour therefore to enter into That Rest, lest any man fall under the same example of Unbelief.* By attending to, and observing This *Allusion*, there is very great Light given to the Apostle's *whole* Discourse in That ivth Chapter to the *Hebrews*, which otherwise is difficult to be distinctly and clearly understood. But to proceed.

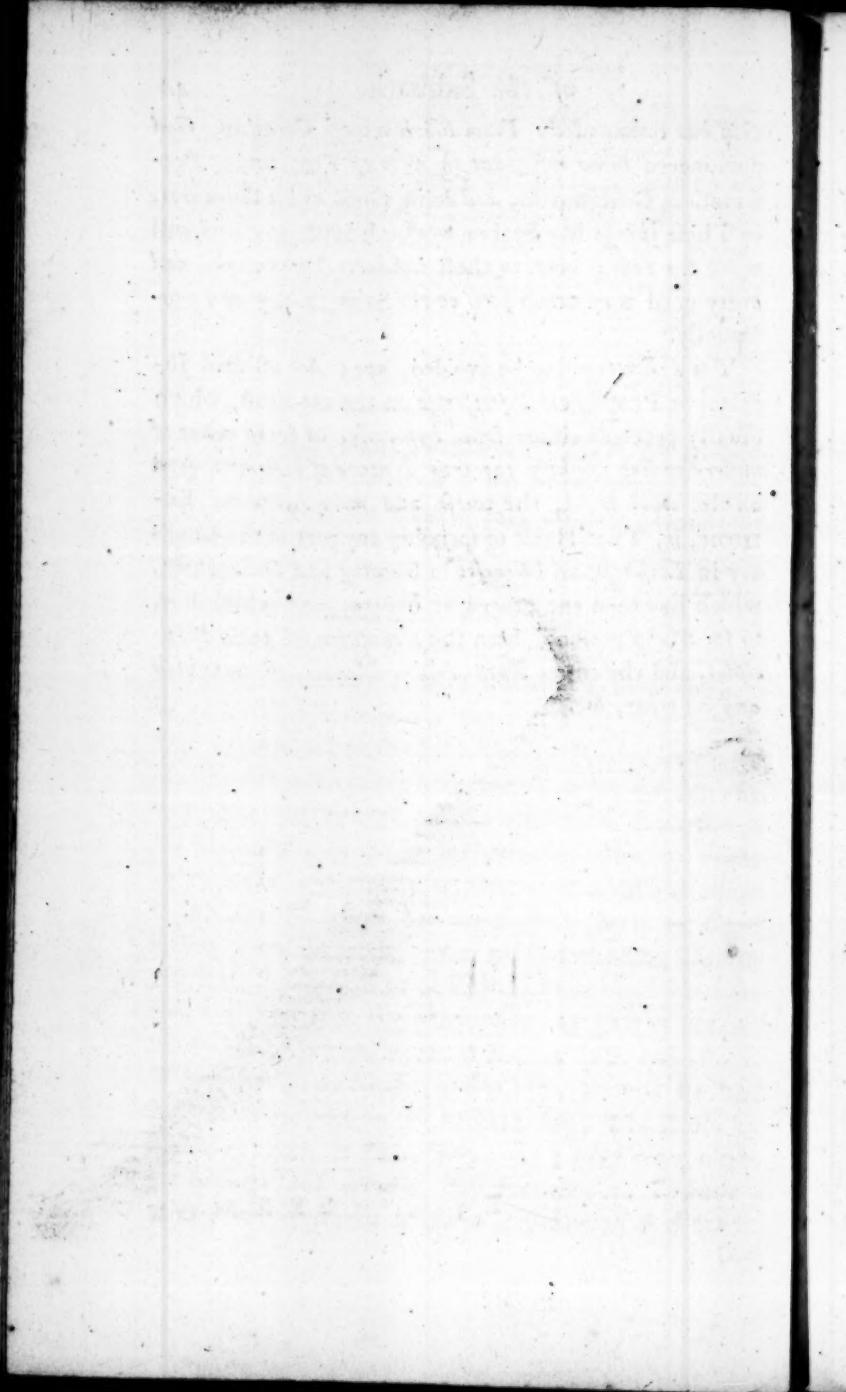
As the *Moral* part of the Commandment concerning the Sabbath, is of *perpetual* obligation; so the *ritual* or *instituted* part, which had relation (as a *particular Memorial*) to the Deliverance of the *Jews* out of *Egypt*, is abolished by the Gospel. Inſomuch that St *Paul*, in the place before-cited, *Col.* iii. 16, 17; among *ordinances of meats and drinks, and new-moons, and other shadows of things to come*, reckons up also the *Sabbath-days*. But then, instead of the *Jewish* Sabbath, there succeeded, by the Appointment and Practice of the Apostles, the commemoration of our Lord's *Resurrection*. Which coming to pass upon the *first* day of the Week, the Christian *Lord's day*, instead of the *seventh* which was the *Jewish* Sabbath; it was accordingly from thenceforth kept on the *first* day of the Week. Thus we read, *Acts* xx. 7; that upon the first day of the Week, when the Disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them. And *1 Cor.* xvi. 1, 2; Concerning the Collection for the Saints;—upon the first day of the week, saith he, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him. And *Rev.* i. 10; it is, by St *John*, expressed by Name: I was, saith he, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

THE Manner, in which it ought to be observed among *Christians*, is, in attending the Publick Worship of God, in hearing the Word, in reading the Scriptures; in instructing and assisting those, over whom we have any kind of influence, in the Knowledge and Practice of their Duty. In a word, it is to be spent in works of *Necessity*, and in works of *Charity*; and in whatsoever tends, without Superstition and without Affectation, to the real Honour of God, and to the true Interest and Promoting of Religion and Virtue in the World. Concerning works of *Necessity*; our Saviour in the Text, upon occasion of his Disciples plucking the Ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day, expressly exempts us from the Preciseness of the Pharisaical hypocrisy: *The Sabbath*, saith he, *was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath*. Concerning works of *Charity*; these are so direct and proper, so great and principal a part of true Religion, that, as if it were *on purpose* to show these to be even the *most acceptable* part of That Rest which God commanded on the Sabbath, our Saviour seems, in the whole course of his Ministry, to have industriously as it were *sought for* all possible occasions of doing things of *This nature* upon the Sabbath-day, that he might thence take opportunity to reprove the false Notions which the Pharisees had entertained, both of *God's* resting from *His* work, and of his commanding *Them* to rest from *Theirs*. The careful observing of which matter, will clear to us the Sense of an *expression* of our Saviour, which otherwise is not obvious to be understood. When the *Jews* sought to slay him, because he had healed a lame man on the Sabbath-day; The Reply he makes to them, is This, *Job. v. 17*; *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*. His meaning is: *Ye have a very wrong Notion of the true Sabbatical Rest which*

God

God has commanded: *From his work of Creation, God does indeed Now rest; but in Acts of Providence, Preservation, Government, and doing Good to his Creatures, in These things My Father worketh Hitherto, and will work for ever; And in these instances I also work, and every good man works both on the Sabbath-day and continually.*

THE *Extremes* to be avoided, are; An affected Judaical or Pharisaical *Preciseness* on the one hand, which usually proceeds either from *hypocrisy*, or from *want of understanding rightly the true Nature of religion*: And on the other hand, the worse and more dangerous *Extreme*, is, That Habit of spending any part of the Lord's day in *Looseness* and *Idleness*, in *Gaming* and *Debauchery*, which has been encouraged by *Popery*, and which has, to so *Many* persons, been the *corruption* of their *Principles*, and the entire *Ruin* of their *Morals*. *From which and all other, &c.*



SERMON IV.

The Parable of the Sower explained.

St LUKE viii. 15.

But that on the good ground, are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with Patience.

THESE Words are part of that Explication of the Parable of the Sower, which our Saviour was pleased to give to his Disciples in private, after he had spoken the Parable itself publicly in the hearing of the Multitude, without interpreting it to ~~them~~ at all. The *Reasons* of his making which great Difference between his Disciples and the rest of the People, were these two. 1st, Because the Disciples were intended by our Saviour to be Preachers of the word, to teach and explain it to *others*; and therefore it was very necessary, that they should first be fully and particularly instructed to understand every thing distinctly *themselves*. This reason we find our Saviour giving, St *Matt.* xiii. 51: where the Evangelist relating the same History of our Saviour's

Saviour's explaining this and some other Parables to his Disciples in private, adds at the conclusion, ver. 51; *Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord: Then said he unto them, Therefore every Scribe which is instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old: That is; He had given them these particular Instructions, expecting they should take care so to lay up his Doctrines in their Minds, as that they might be thoroughly qualified to be successful Preachers of the Gospel, and be able upon all Occasions to bring forth out of their Memory, as out of a well-furnished Storehouse, instructions suited to Persons of all Capacities. So that those who at present had not these things explained to them, might afterwards, as many of them as were capable, come to receive instruction from the Disciples, who were sent forth into the world for that very End. The other Reason of our Saviour's making so great a difference between his Disciples and the Multitude, in explaining all things distinctly to the one, and speaking to the other in Parables without the interpretation; was the unworthiness and incapacity, at present, of the greater part of the mixt multitude, to hear and judge of his Doctrine. This Reason we find our Saviour giving, in the words a little before the Text; where, upon his Disciples asking him the meaning of the Parable, he introduces his explication with these words, ver. 10; *Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.* Which words at first Sight, may seem to ascribe the cause of this different treatment not to the different Qualifications of the Persons, but merely to the absolute*

late Will of God, whose pleasure it was to have it so; which would be very difficult to reconcile with the Attributes of God, who declares himself to be no respecter of persons. But in the xiiith chapter of *St Matthew*, where the same History is again related, we find the same words set down more at large, and explained so, as clearly to lay the blame upon the Persons themselves, and not upon any unwillingness in God to assist them: ver. 10; *The Disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto Them in parables? He answered, and said unto Them, Because it is given unto You to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to Them it is not given: For, whosoever bath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever bath not, from him shall be taken away even That he bath: Therefore speak I to Them in parables; because they seeing see not, and bearing they bear not, neither do they understand: That is, to the Disciples who attended to, and considered; and were desirous to practise his Doctrine, he continually explained things more and more, to you that bear, shall more be given, as St Mark expresses it; but the careless and prejudiced multitude, were neither worthy nor capable of such instruction; And then he adds, ver. 14; *And in Them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By bearing ye shall bear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; For this peoples heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of bearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and bear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* In this larger and fuller account of the words, given by *St Matthew*, the defect appears plainly to be only in the people themselves: God, is always ready to heal them upon their Conversion;*

Conversion; but they themselves are careless, and desire not to be converted; and the Prophecy is not a declaration of what God chooses to do on *his* part, but a Complaint of the peoples carelessness, incapacity, and unworthiness to receive our Lord's instruction. And in this Sense we find St Paul expressly interpreting the same Prophetical words, *Acts* xxviii. 25; when, upon the *Jews* neglecting and obstinately refusing to attend his preaching of the Gospel at *Rome*; after much patience, he at length left them, with this protestation; *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet, unto our Fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall bear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.* So that our Saviour's forbearing to explain the Parable to the multitude, must by no means be understood as proceeding from any unwillingness in *Him* to give them all necessary instruction; but it was plainly only his putting in Practice that Rule himself, which he afterwards gave in direction to his Disciples, that they should not *cast their Pearls before Swine*, that is, before prejudiced and unworthy persons; lest thereby they should expose *Themselves* to injuries, and their *Doctrine* to contempt. 'Tis the very same case, as in the instance of his forbearing to work Miracles in his own Country; Not that he was more unwilling to convert those of his own Country than others; but because the unreasonable Prejudices and Obstinacy of those particular persons, made *Them* unworthy, and would have rendred the *Miracles themselves* useless. This seems to be the true account of our Saviour's forbearing to interpret the Parable to the Multitude; and it shows how dangerous a thing it is, to raise Doctrines from particular and single Texts of Scripture, without comparing them with other parallel places, which

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more fully represent the same sense under different Expressions,

THE Parable itself, of which the Text is part of the Explication, is a lively description of the nature and manner of the Preaching of the Gospel, and of the different Effects that the Doctrine of Christ has upon different Persons, according to their different Tempers, Dispositions, and Qualifications. God sent his Son into the World, to the intent that All men through him might be saved, and come to the knowledge of the Truth: Accordingly our Saviour sent forth his Disciples with an universal Commission, *Go ye into all the earth, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* This is represented by a Sower's going forth to sow his seed, and scattering it in *variety* of Places. (The Similitude is suited to the Capacity of the vulgar, and agreeable to the usual method of instruction in the *Jewish* Nation; that those among the multitude, who were well-disposed, might consider and enquire and be informed in the Doctrine by degrees; at the same time that the careless and unattentive remained wholly ignorant; and they who were prejudiced and designed to cavil, might have no handle to do it.) Now, according to the intent of the Parable, Among Them who hear the preaching of the Gospel, there is great diversity; and the Effect it has upon them, according to their different tempers, is likewise very different. Some hear or read the Gospel with so little regard and attention, that it makes no impression at all upon their minds, but they immediately forget it; and though their own Vices be particularly described, and the danger of them shown, yet they never make the application to themselves, but, as St James expresses it, ch. i. ver. 23, *are like unto a Man beholding his natural Face in a glass, who beholdeth himself*

himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was : These persons our Saviour compares to the way-side, the beaten road into which the Seed that fell upon it never entred at all, but was either trodden under feet and destroyed by them that passed over it, or else was picked up by the Birds of the Air. Others, when they hear the Gospel preached, are indeed at first moved by it with some warmth of devotion, and embrace it chearfully ; but, having no wise and settled resolutions, no firmness and constancy of Mind ; upon the first Difficulties and Temptations that assault them, they very quickly fall away : These our Saviour describes under the notion of stony or rocky ground, where the Earth being very thin, and shallow, the Seed that fell into it soon sprung up indeed, but, for want of moisture and depth to take root, as soon as the Sun shined hot, it withered away, *Matt. xiii. 5, 6.* Others, when the Gospel is preached to them, are convinced of the Truth and Reasonableness of the Doctrine, and, as often as they are exhorted to it, make some slight resolutions of obeying and living up to it : But the perpetually returning Cares and Business, the Covetousness, the Ambition and the Pleasures of the World, do so wholly take up their Thoughts and Attention, that they make no effectual improvement in the practice of Religion, and it has little or no real influence upon their Lives and Conversations : These our Saviour compares to Ground which brought forth Corn indeed, but together with it such a Number of Thorns and Weeds, as quickly over-ran and choaked it, so that it never came to any Perfection. These are the several ways, of which our Saviour warns us in this Parable, by which they who hear the constant preaching of the Gospel, may yet be guilty of a final miscarriage ;
 through

through Carelessness, and Inattention; through want of Constancy, and good Resolution; through the Cares and Covetousness and Pleasures of the World: So that there was great reason for the caution he gives his Disciples at the Conclusion of his Discourse upon this Subject, ver. 18; *Take heed how ye bear.* Lastly; Others there are, who being of a truly good and virtuous disposition, willingly and chearfully embrace the Word of God, believe it heartily, adhere to it steadily, obey it sincerely, and show forth the effects of it in the constant practice and persevering course of a good Life: And These our Saviour in the Text compares to *good ground*, which brought forth much fruit; *That on the good ground faith he, are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with Patience.*

THE general intent and meaning of the Parable being thus explained; the Words themselves offer to us the following things, worthy our particular Observation.

I. *First*; THAT the first and principal thing required, to qualify a man and make him meet for the Kingdom of God, is an *honest and good heart*, a true and right Disposition, an upright and sincere intention: *That on the good ground, are they, which in an honest and good Heart, &c.* Our Saviour was sent as a Light into the World, to recover men out of the Darkness and Slavery of Sin, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God: But, as the Brightness of the Sun itself discovers no Objects to Them, who have no Organs of Seeing to discern its Light; so the Doctrine of the Gospel has no effect, no influence upon Those, whose hearts are not honest and sincere, to entertain it in the Love thereof. God is not obliged to enlighten such, as are wilfully blind; and

which refuse to search after and discern the Truth; because they *have pleasure in unrighteousness*: But they who are desirous to *do his Will*, *shall* know and understand it; and be enabled to practise it acceptably. There is in the temper and disposition of such persons, a likeness and congruity, with the everlasting Law of Righteousness; The Nature and Commands of God, the Divine Life both in Heaven and in Earth, are agreeable to them; and the Doctrine of the Gospel is embraced by them with Complacency, as Truth is received by Children who have never been prejudiced thro' ill Habits, and as good Seed springs up and flourishes immediately, in its natural and proper Soil. This honest and good heart, this Innocency and Simplicity of Mind, this freedom from Malice, from evil and corrupt designs; is the disposition which our Saviour requires, and which he esteems so highly, when in the parallel place to the Text, upon the occasion of young Children being brought unto him, he declares that *of such is the Kingdom of God*. 'Tis the temper of *Nathanael*, that *Israslite* indeed, of whom our Saviour bore this Testimony, even *before* his acknowledging *Him* to be the *Messias*, that there was *no guile in him*. 'Tis the disposition of the *Bereans*; who, when Christ was preached to them by the Apostles, to be He of whom all the Prophets witnessed; immediately *they searched the Scriptures*, the Writings of the *Old Testament*, *daily*; to see *whether those things were so*, or not. 'Tis the Temper of *Zachæus*, who, upon our Saviour's preaching Repentance unto Life; without delay declared, because his Profession had been such as in all probability had exposed him to many Temptations of Extortion, that *the half of his goods he gave to the poor, and, if he had wronged any man, he restored him four-fold*. In a word, 'tis that preparation of

of heart, with which St *Peter's* Auditors came, when by the strength and evidence of his Discourse, there was in one day added to the Church about three thousand Souls: concerning whom it is said, *Acts* ii. 47, that *the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*: The original word does not signify *such as should be saved*, but *such as are or were saved*; that is, such as were disposed, (as the Apostle in the same place expresses it,) to *save themselves from that untoward generation*; such as were ready in Order (*τεταγμένοι*) (as the like persons are elsewhere described) to receive the Doctrine of eternal Life. All which, with other the like Expressions, must not be understood to signify, as if such persons were already actually indued with *all* Christian Virtues and Graces; (For these indeed are not the preparations *for*, but the Fruits and Effects *of* the Spirit;) but they signify only the general capacity or aptness, a willingness or suitableness of Disposition, to attain and improve them. Which Disposition, under the disadvantages of ignorance and want of Instruction, of prejudice and error, and of variety of Temptations without suitable assistances to overcome them; may easily lie hid, and not discover itself; nay, may sometimes seem to be extinguished in great measure, by contrary Practices; But, upon due instruction and reasonable conviction, it will not fail to appear and exert itself. Thus St *Paul* himself was once not only an Unbeliever, but a Persecutor also of the Church of God; But yet even *Then* there was a sincerity in him, which made him act zealously, though in a wrong way; and afterwards he easily found mercy, because he had done it ignorantly in Unbelief. The best and most innocent Understanding may, for want of due Instruction, be led astray with prejudices; but it will not become obstinate and incorrigible: The best and most

fruitful Soil, while it continues uncultivated, may *not* only bring forth no good fruit, but moreover be over-run with weeds and thorns, yet being capable of amendment and just improvement, it will not fail, upon due cultivation, to discover its fruitfulness. *The earth*, as St Paul expresses it, *which drinketh in the rain that cometh ast upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which* (after this, still) *beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned; Heb. vi. 7:* The contrary temper, is that of those, who after all reasonable means of conviction, still continue incorrigible and unreformed; these have no principle of sincerity and upright intention in them, by which they may be recovered and saved; (these are none of the Sheep of Christ;) but their End must be, unavoidable Destruction.

THE Application therefore of This Observation, is to All who profess the Religion of Christ. If no man, without an upright and sincere intention, can worthily receive the Doctrine of Christ, or is capable of becoming a true member of his *Kingdom on Earth*; What hope is there for such, who *already* profess to have entertained his Doctrine and to be his Disciples, that they shall be judged worthy to be admitted into his *Kingdom in Heaven*; if, notwithstanding this Profession, they still continue to act with a dishonest and unsincere Heart? If in the *Progress* of a Christian life, they still want that first and most necessary Qualification, without which they could not worthily *begin* it, nor be duly prepared for so much as the *Admission or Entrance* into so excellent a State, into the Profession of so holy a Religion? If, instead of renouncing the Vanities and Temptations of the *World*, for the advantage and improvement of Religion; they

they on the contrary make Religion only subordinate to the Interests and Pleasures of the World? Surely the Hope of such Persons, is, as *Job* elegantly expresses it, like to a *Spider's Web*; and the joy of the *hypocrite*, is but for a moment.

II. *Secondly*; THE *second* thing remarkable in the Words, is the Supposition they contain, that 'tis not sufficient that a man be of a good disposition in *general*, but 'tis moreover necessary in *particular*, that he hear and entertain the Doctrine of Christ: *That on the good ground, are they which in an honest and good Heart, having heard the Word, &c.* It is not sufficient that the Soil be good, but it must also be sown with good Seed: It is not sufficient that the Eye is made capable of discerning the Light, if God had not created *light* in the World, to dispel that Darkness, which at the Chaos sat on the Face of the Deep. Christ is the true Light, that is come into the World; and every one that will not walk in darkness, is indispensably obliged to receive His doctrine. Mere Dispositions, Faculties, and Capacities without improvement, may possibly be very ineffectual; as is evident from the extreme ignorance of some whole Nations, even at this day. But Learning and Instruction civilizes and cultivates mens nature, raising it from savage to humane; and true religion improves it still farther, and exalts it to divine. Now there is no religion in the World, but the *Christian* only, that is at all able to furnish men with instructions sufficiently clear, with motives sufficiently weighty, with assistances sufficiently powerful, to overcome the Temptations of this present World; For, *who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* and *This only is the victory that overcometh*

the World, even our Faith, 1 Joh. vi. 4; Our Faith, that is, our firm and stedfast belief and assurance, of the Pardon of past Sins through the merits of Christ, of the divine assistance for the future, of a resurrection from the dead, of a judgment to come, and of an eternal State of rewards or punishments hereafter. Nothing less than this, can effectually enable men to overcome the World: Except a man embrace therefore *This Faith, except he be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; Neither is there any other Name given under Heaven, by which we must be saved.* All that has been said upon This Head, must by no means be applied to any of those, to whom the Gospel was either never preached, or never faithfully and reasonably represented. For to whom *little* is given, of Them will not be *much* required: To such Persons, God will either in his own good time cause the *words* to be preached, *by which they and their houses shall be saved;* as he did to *Cornelius*, that sincerely pious and devout Centurion; or else he will finally judge them by other measures: For *the Judge of all the Earth will do what is right,* and with Equity shall he judge the Nations. But all such, to whom the Light of the Gospel has been manifested, are indispensably obliged to *walk by that Light;* and modern Unbelievers in Christian Nations act very unworthily, when they obstinately oppose that revealed Religion, from whence alone they have borrowed even the *Philosophy* they pretend to. For, (as is evident from the extreme ignorance of the whole Heathen World) 'tis from the *Christian Doctrine* only, that Unbelievers have Now borrowed all that knowledge, by which they would endeavour to set up mere nature (or rather absolute Scepticism) in opposition to Christ's Religion.

III. *Thirdly*; THE next thing observable in the Words of the Text, is, that 'tis not sufficient that men hear and receive the Doctrine of Christ, but they must also *keep or retain it*; Who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it: It must not be like Seed scattered loose upon the Earth, which the Birds of the Air pick up, or Passengers tread under foot, or the first shower of rain washes away; but it must be like that, which entreth into the Earth, and abides in it, and grows, and takes root therein. It must be understood, and remembred, and frequently meditated upon: The Principles of Religion must be thoroughly imbibed by a man, and fixt in him, and make deep and lasting impressions upon his Mind: They must be converted, as it were, into the *Food and Nourishment* of his Soul; and become, its very Habit and Temper: They must be in him *Active* and Ruling Principles, the first springs of all his Motions, and the continual guides and directors of all the Actions of his Life. This is what St *John* expresses by the Seed remaining in him, 1 *Job*. iii. 9; *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin; for his Seed remaineth in him; and he cannot Sin, because he is born of God.* St *Matthew*, in the parallel place, in the explication of the same Parable, expresses it by hearing and understanding the Word, St *Matt*. xiii. 23; i. e. meditating upon it and studying it, so as to make it a principle of Life and Action; For so in Scripture-phrase, it is always to be lookt upon as a general Rule of interpretation; that the *Fear of the Lord, That only is Wisdom*; and to depart from evil, *That only is acknowledged to be Understanding*; And otherwise, he is That *foolish* person, whom our Saviour describes as building his house upon the Sand. For so,

the World, even our Faith, 1 Joh. v. 4; Our Faith, that is, our firm and stedfast belief and assurance, of the Pardon of past Sins through the merits of Christ, of the divine assistance for the future, of a resurrection from the dead, of a judgment to come, and of an eternal State of rewards or punishments hereafter. Nothing less than this, can effectually enable men to overcome the World: Except a man embrace therefore This Faith, except he be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; Neither is there any other Name given under Heaven, by which we must be saved. All that has been said upon This Head, must by no means be applied to any of those, to whom the Gospel was either never preached, or never faithfully and reasonably represented. For to whom *little* is given, of Them will not be *much* required: To such Persons, God will either in his own good time cause the *words* to be preached, *by which they and their houses shall be saved*; as he did to *Cornelius*, that sincerely pious and devout Centurion; or else he will finally judge them by other measures: For *the Judge of all the Earth will do what is right*, and with Equity shall he judge the Nations. But all such, to whom the Light of the Gospel has been manifested, are indispensably obliged to *walk by that Light*; and modern Unbelievers in Christian Nations act very unworthily, when they obstinately oppose that revealed Religion, from whence alone they have borrowed even the *Philosophy* they pretend to. For, (as is evident from the extreme ignorance of the whole Heathen World) 'tis from the *Christian Doctrine* only, that Unbelievers have Now borrowed all that knowledge, by which they would endeavour to set up mere nature (or rather absolute Scepticism) in opposition to Christ's Religion.

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in Scripture-phrase, not Ignorant *Persons only* and Infidels, are styled Fools and Unbelievers; but *Fools*, in Scripture-expression, more commonly signifies, such persons as *act* not according to what they *know*; and *Unbelievers*, such as *practise* not what they profess to believe.

IV. *Fourthly*; THEREFORE, Our Saviour adds further, that Those whom he compares to good ground, must, if they will justify that Character, make evidence of it finally by their *bringing forth Fruit: Who having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit.* This is the only certain and infallible Mark, of the Truth and Sincerity of all that is supposed to have gone before; the only substantial evidence, of their having an honest, and good Heart; of their embracing, and believing the Word; of their keeping, and having meditated upon it. All *other* Signs and Proofs may fail; all *other* marks and characters whatsoever of a good Christian, may prove erroneous and deceitful, not only to others, but very possibly in great measure even to a man's self also; except *This* only, of his *bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit*; that is, living in the Habitual Practice of all Christian Virtues; which St Paul calls walking *worthy* of God *who has called us*, and *worthy* of the *vocation wherewith we are called.* And *This* is an evidence, which can never fail; For the *Effect* must always of necessity be proportionable, to the nature and operations of the *Cause* that produced it; and there can be no mistake in judging of the goodness of a *Cause*, from the excellency of its proper and immediate *Effects.* *A corrupt Tree, cannot bring forth good fruit; neither do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles*; St Matt. vii. 16. So that the Rule
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our Saviour gives for the tryal of true and false *Prophets*, holds still *more evidently* in judging of good and bad *Christians*, and especially in the judgment men are to pass upon *Themselves* and concerning their *own* estate; By *their Fruits* they may *know* it: And St *John's* determination is liable to no evasion or misinterpretation, 1 *Job. iii. 10*; *In this the Children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil; Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother.*

V. *Fifthly*; 'Tis observable that our Saviour concludes his Character of a good Christian, with the addition of *Patience*, as a Qualification necessary to be joined with all those hitherto mentioned: *Having heard the word, they keep it, and bring forth fruit with Patience: i. e. As Corn sown, if it be ever likely to come to any Perfection, must take such deep and firm root in the Earth, as not to be scorched by Heat, nor withered by Cold, nor washed away with floods, nor choaked and over-run with Weeds; so a good Christian must be armed with Patience, to resist the assaults of Persecution, the Temptations of the World, the Enticements of bad Company, the Allurements of Pleasure and Profit, and the perpetual Treachery of his own corrupt Affections and inordinate Passions; 'till at length he obtains a title to that Promise of our Saviour, that he shall be saved because he has endured unto the End. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life.*

Lastly, and to conclude; 'Tis worthy of remark, that St *Matthew*, in the parallel place of his Gospel, adds to the Words of the Text, that of Those who kept

kept the Word, and bore Fruit with patience, *some brought forth an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty.* And this denotes to us these two things. 1st, that those who embrace and obey the Gospel in sincerity according to their Power, though they have not the Capacity and Ability of doing actually so much good in the World, as others have; yet shall be accepted according to the Integrity and Sincerity of their Intention: Thus the Servant who gained two Talents, was as certainly admitted into his Master's joy, tho' not into the same Proportion of it, as he who had gained ten; and St Paul argues, that in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour; by dishonour, meaning, not uselessness and being wholly rejected, (as some understand it,) but only a less Degree of value and esteem, as the nature and design of his similitude plainly requires.) Which tho' they be indeed within the house, and not wholly excluded; yet no man who has a worthy Sense of religion, can long content himself with being of that number, without desiring any further improvement. For 2^{dly}, This distinction of *some bringing forth an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty*, as on the one hand 'tis an encouragement to the meanest Persons, who are sincerely religious; so on the other hand it points out a very great advantage, which God has put into the Hands of *Those of greater Abilities*. Power and Authority, Honour and Dignity, Riches and Interest, are so many Talents committed to mens charge; which if they make use of to the Glory of God and the publick Good of Mankind, they thereby

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thereby entitle themselves to a proportionably greater and more illustrious Reward; For *they that are wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; but they that turn many to righteousness, (by great Example or Power, or any other commendable means,) shall shine with yet brighter glory as the stars for ever and ever.*

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SERMON V.

The End and Design of the *Jewish Law.*

GAL. ii. 15, 16.

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

THERE is nothing has given greater occasion to false opinions, and unreasonable disputes in Religion; than the picking out single Texts of Scripture, and interpreting them according to the first sound of the words, without considering the coherence and connection of the whole Discourse. Thus, e. g. if we search on one hand into the Ground of many of those mens Assertions, who love to aggravate the corruption of humane nature, and the natural misery of mankind;

mankind; we shall find the true foundation of them, to be the applying those places of Scripture to the *whole bulk* of mankind, which are evidently and expressly spoken only of some of the *worst of men*: On the other hand the reason why others have so magnified the *natural faculties of men*, as that they have been thought to *diminish* and *detract* from the *grace of God*; is because they have applied those Texts to the *generality of men*, which are spoken only of the *most perfect Christians*. Again; the foundation of those mens opinion, who have extolled some *one* particular virtue in opposition to, or as an equivalent for, *all other* duties; is their having interpreted such places of Scripture concerning some *one* particular virtue, as are plainly meant of the *whole* Christian Religion: And the reason why others have thought *no* moral Virtues at all, necessary to be practised by Believers; is because they have applied those Texts to the most *essential* and *fundamental Duties* of the *Christian* Religion, which were intended only of the *Ceremonial* performances of the *Jewish* Law. Who ever therefore will so read and understand the Holy Scriptures, as from thence to determine truly what is necessary to be believed, and practised by Christians; must not only from single Texts, and those interpreted at pleasure, frame to himself or receive from Authority of Others, a Scheme of Religion; (for then there will be as many different Systems, as the fancies and prejudices of Men or different Bodies of Men are different;) but he must consider the nature and design of the several parts of the whole Revelation; he must consider the proper Signification of those terms and expressions, which were in use at the time when the Books of Scripture were written; and above all, he must attend to the coherence and connexion of the

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Author's Discourse, the occasion of his writing, and the true Scope and intent of each passage, from whence, he would deduce any Doctrine of Faith, or Rule of Practice. The *Gospels* are a brief History of the Life of our Blessed Saviour; and contain in them, 1st, the Terms or Conditions, upon which those who would become Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ, are to be admitted into that State; and 2^{dly}, the general Laws or Rules, to which those who do *already* profess themselves Christians, must conform their Lives. The Terms or Conditions, upon which men are to become Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ, are declared by *John the Baptist* and by our Saviour himself at his first Preaching, to be Faith and Repentance. The General Laws or Rules of Obedience, by which those who are *already* Subjects of his Kingdom, must govern their Lives; are delivered directly and principally in our Saviour's *Sermon upon the mount*; but occasionally also urged in his *other* Discourses, and most lively expressed in the example of his Life: The Sermon upon the Mount, contains a particular Explication of the ten Commandments, which are the moral and eternal Law of God, explaining the Duty and Obedience we owe to God, and the Love and Charity we must perform to men; It contains also a *Vindication* of That Law, from the *false and corrupt* Glosses of the *Jewish* Doctors; and Exhortations to a more exalted, spiritual, and perfect manner of performing those Duties, than was before insisted on even by the *true* intent of the Law. The *Parables* and occasional Discourses of our Saviour, are chiefly to explain the *nature*, and set forth the true *design* of the Gospel; which for the most part in those Discourses is called the *Kingdom of Heaven*, to express the greatness and excellency of that Dispensation. And

lastly, the History of his *Life*, is a most compleat pattern of *all Christian Virtues*, proposed plainly and familiarly to our Imitation: but more especially 'tis an example of *patience* under afflictions, of *resignation* to the will of God in all conditions, and of *contempt* of the world. Thus the Gospels contain a plain System of Christian Religion in general, enforced both by precept and example; and are therefore profitable to instruct us in all Righteousness, and to furnish us thoroughly unto all good Works. The *Acts* of the Holy Apostles, contain the History of the Apostles Preaching and Doctrine, which was the same with what their Master had before taught, namely, Repentance and Obedience; together with an account of the Success of this their Ministry, and of the State of the Infant Churches in those purest times, immediately after their being founded by the Apostles. The *Epistles* contain either *general* Exhortations to *all* Christians, in order to confirm and strengthen them in the Faith; or *particular* and *occasional* Discourses to *single* Churches upon particular Controversies or Matters of Dispute. Those which contain *general* Exhortations to all Christians, are easy to be understood by all, who read them with a sincere Desire to be instructed in their Duty, or confirmed in their Faith: Those which are written upon *particular* questions of dispute, cannot be rightly understood, without first understanding the *matter* of those Disputes, and the *occasions* upon which the Epistles were written. Of this latter sort are many of St Paul's Epistles, and especially This to the *Galatians*, and That to the *Romans*. Which because they relate almost wholly to a Controversy, that arose upon the very first planting of Christianity; they have in latter times, for want of attending to the true occasion of their being written,

written, been much misinterpreted, and by many wrested to their own destruction. And no Explication of *particular* Passages, can be of so much importance towards stating the Apostles true Sense, as giving in the first place a distinct View of the *general* Design of his *whole* Writings. In order therefore to the clearer understanding the true Design of these Epistles, it is to be observed, that before the coming of Christ, the *Jews* were the peculiar People of God, selected out of all the Nations of the earth to be the Standrad of true Religion, the People among whom God would choose to place his Name, and over whom should continually watch the peculiar care of the divine Providence: *To them were committed the oracles of God*, Rom. iii. 2; *to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever*; Rom. ix. 4, 5. *To them were committed the oracles of God*; i. e. with them were intrusted all the Revelations of the Will of God, the Law and the Prophecies, as the people with whom God thought fit to deposit these things for the benefit of the World, to them they were committed as a light or standard to which all Nations might flow, and in fact we find that Profelytes from all Nations, attracted by the splendour of those great and mighty actions which God wrought for and among this people, did come in and embrace their Religion: *To them pertained the adoption*, i. e. they were honoured with the peculiar privilege of being accounted as the Sons or People of God, and of being accordingly under the more peculiar care and protection of his providence. *When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the Sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people accord-*

ing to the number of the children of Israel; for the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance; Deut. xxxii. 9; i. e. God so divided and settled the nations of the earth, as to have the people of the Jews in a more particular manner under his own immediate Care and Protection; for the Lord has chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure; Psal. cxxxv. 4. To them pertained the glory; i. e. among them was the ark and temple of God, the (Shekinah or) glorious presence of the divine Majesty; In Judah was God known, his name was great in Israel; In Salem also was his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion; Ps. lxxvi. 1, 2. To them pertained the covenants, i. e. with them God entered solemnly into covenant, that he would be their God and they should be his people; and confirmed this covenant with the sacramental seal of circumcision, and sprinkling of blood. To them pertained the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; i. e. their manner of worship was such as was prescribed them in a wonderful and miraculous manner by God himself; and their polity also was of divine Institution and Appointment: God shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; He hath not dealt so with any other nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws; Ps. cxlviii. 19, 20: To them was the law given, written on tables of stone with God's own hand, and to them were the prophets always sent with inspired instructions. Inspir'd by the Spirit of God to instruct them occasionally in their duty, to warn them of impending Judgments, and to exhort them to prevent those Judgments falling upon them, by a timely repentance; and to them particularly belonged all the promises contained in the law and in the prophets. Lastly, Theirs were the fathers, and of them according

to the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever; i. e. They were the posterity of those Patriarchs, to whom God had so often promised and sworn by himself, that in their seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed; and among them was born that *Messias*, of whom so great things had been prophesied and who was therefore the expectation of all the ends of the earth. These great and glorious privileges, the latter *Jews* did not make a right use of with Humility and Thankfulness, but valued themselves too highly, and despised all other Nations as Aliens from the Commonwealth of *Israel*, Strangers to the covenant of promise, and scarce worthy of the protection of the divine Providence. The establishment of their law and ceremonies they imagined to be designed of God to continue for ever; and the promises contained in the law and the prophets they thought belong'd so peculiarly to themselves, that they would not believe any other people should ever be allowed to be partakers of them. When the *Messiah* himself should appear, they were perswaded that he was to establish an everlasting Kingdom over the *Jewish* nation only, and so become indeed the wonder and amazement, but not the Salvation of the *Gentiles*. This error of theirs, prevailed long even among our Saviour's Disciples themselves, and began then first to be reprov'd and oppos'd, when St *Peter*, having an express command from Heaven not to count any man common or unclean, Acts x. 28; went and preached the Gospel to *Cornelius* the centurion; being convinc'd that God was of a truth no respecter of persons, but that he had unto the *Gentiles* also granted repentance unto life; and that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. Upon This the converted *Jews*, who had not yet laid aside their ancient prejudices, contended earnestly for

for the necessity of continuing to observe the ceremonial Law; *teaching the brethren every where, and saying, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*; Acts xv. 1. Against whom, the Apostles, assembled on purpose in a Council at *Jerusalem*, made a solemn determination; as is at large related, *Acts xv*: and accordingly we find *St Paul*, (as being the Apostle to whom was particularly committed the preaching of the Gospel to the *Gentiles*) in all his Writings earnestly exhorting his Gentile Converts not to look upon themselves as bound to observe the law of *Moses*, but on the contrary to *stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free*. This is the true State of that controversy, which at the time when this Epistle to the *Galatians*, and that to the *Romans*, were written; was the chief and almost only considerable Subject of dispute in the Christian Church. Now that there are abundance of passages in these Epistles, which so plainly relate to this Controversy, that they cannot possibly be interpreted to any other sense, is very evident. A great part of the Epistle to the *Romans* is in express Words about the casting off the *Jews*, and the coming in of the *Gentiles*; particularly the ixth, xth, and xith Chapters; and the xivth Chapter is wholly employed in shewing the unnecessariness of the *Jewish* observation of days, and distinction of meats; *One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike*, ver. 5; *and I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*; ver. 14. In the Epistle to the *Galatians*, the same Apostle warns his Gentile converts against such as would persuade them to Judaize; *They constrain you, saith he, to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for*

for the cross of Christ; For neither do they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh; ch. vi. ver. 12, 13: He assures them that in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, ch. vi. ver. 15: He exhorts them earnestly, to stand fast in their Christian liberty, and not to be intangled again with the yoke of bondage: He tells them also how he openly rebuked St Peter at Antioch, for withdrawing and separating himself from the Gentiles, for fear of them which were of the circumcision; ch. ii. 12. All which, and many other the like passages referring so evidently and expressly to the fore-mentioned controversy, whether it was necessary or not for the new Converts to keep the Mosaick law; are a certain guide to direct us in interpreting the other parts of these Epistles. This therefore being premised in general, we may proceed to observe more particularly; that the Apostle designing on one hand to magnify the Gospel by setting forth its sufficiency to Salvation, and on the other hand to demonstrate the insufficiency and unnecessaryness of the ceremonial Observances of the Jewish Law; does all along make use of such terms to express the Christian and Jewish Religion by, as may best serve to set forth the excellency of the one, and diminish the opinion which men had taken up of the necessity of the other. And

1st; BECAUSE the first and most fundamental duty of the Gospel, is believing in God, and believing that most perfect Revelation of his Will, which he has made to mankind by our Saviour Jesus Christ; whereas on the contrary the principal part of that Religion which the Judaizing Christians so earnestly contended for, was an anxious observance of the burdensome rites of the ceremonial

ceremonial Law; therefore the Apostle calls the Christian Religion *Faith*, and the *Jewish* Religion *the Law*. Rom. iii. 28; *Therefore we conclude*, saith he, *that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*; His meaning is, It clearly appears from what he had already argued, that obedience to the Christian Religion, elsewhere called the obedience of Faith, is sufficient to justify a man, without observing the ceremonies of the *Jewish* Law: And ver. 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law*; i. e. Do we then, as some men object, by our preaching up the Christian Religion disannul and make void the law of God, or that revelation of his will which he made to the *Jews*? No, we are so far from that, that by introducing Christianity we establish, confirm, and perfect the moral and immutable part of the law much more effectually, than the *Jewish* ceremonies were able to do: Thus likewise in the epistle to the *Galatians*, ch. iii. ver. 2; *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the bearing of faith?* Or as 'tis expressed, ver. 5; *He that ministreth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law or by the bearing of faith?* I appeal unto you yourselves, who contend so earnestly for the necessity of keeping up the *Jewish* ceremonies, was it by your observing the rites of the *Jewish* religion that ye received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, or by your being converted to the Christian? So also, Gal. iii. 24; *The Law, saith he, was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*; i. e. the *Jewish* dispensation was appointed by God in condescension to the weakness of that people, to fit them by degrees for the reception of the Gospel. And ch. ii. ver. 15; the
Apostle,

Apostle, having rebuked St Peter openly for withdrawing himself from the Gentiles at *Antioch*, he adds, in the words of the Text, *We who are Jews by nature and not Sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law*; i. e. if we ourselves, saith he, who were born and educated in the *Jewish* Religion, being convinced that that Religion was not able to justify us in the Sight of God, have thought it necessary to imbrace the Gospel of Christ, in hopes to be justified thereby; how much less reason have you to compel the *Gentiles*, who were never brought up at all in the *Jewish* Religion, to begin to conform themselves to the manners of the *Jews*, after their conversion to Christianity?

2dly, BECAUSE the Christian religion teaches us to expect salvation not from our own merits, but from the grace of God, that is, according to the terms of that new and gracious Covenant wherein God has promised to accept of sincere Repentance and Amendment, instead of perfect unfinning Obedience; whereas on the contrary the *Jews* depended upon their exact performance of the works of the law; therefore the Apostle calls the Christian religion *Grace*, and the *Jewish* he styles *Works*; Rom. xi. 5; 6; So then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of *Grace*; i. e. though the nation of the *Jews*, having rejected the gracious offer of the Gospel, are thereupon rejected from being the people of God, yet hath God reserved to himself a remnant from among them, even those who have embraced this grace of God, which is the Gospel of Christ. And if it be by *Grace*, says he, then is it no more of *works*; that is, if it be upon account

count of their having embraced the Christian Religion, that they are reckoned the peculiar people of God, then is not this privilege any longer annexed to the professors of the *Jewish* religion; *Otherwise grace is no more grace; i. e.* otherwise the Christian Religion is in vain, and not what it pretends to be, the grace of God. Thus also, ch. vi. ver. 14; *Sin shall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under grace; i. e.* ye are not under the *Jewish* Religion, but under the Christian. So likewise in the Epistle to the *Galatians*, ch. v. ver. 4; *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace; i. e.* whosoever will needs retain the *Jewish* Religion, he takes upon him to fulfil the whole law; forsaking the gracious dispensation of the Christian Religion, and therefore Christ shall be of no effect unto him. Again,

3dly; BECAUSE the duties of the Christian Religion are almost wholly moral and Spiritual, respecting the inward disposition of the heart and mind; whereas on the contrary the ceremonies of the *Jewish* law were for the most part external; and, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* styles them, carnal ordinances, respecting chiefly the outward purification of the body; therefore the Apostle calls the Christian Religion *Spirit*, and the *Jewish* he styles *Flesh*. Thus in the Epistle to the *Romans*, ch. viii. ver. 3, 4; *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the Flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for Sin [condemned Sin in the flesh, That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; i. e.* Whereas the *Jewish* Religion, because of its outward and carnal ordinances was weak and insufficient to make men truly righteous, God

offer

sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to offer up himself a sacrifice for the Sins of mankind, established the Christian Religion, which purifying thoroughly the whole heart and mind, and purging the conscience from dead works, might, through the grace and mercy of God avail to justify men from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law. Thus also in the Epistle to the *Galatians* iii. 3; *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? i. e.* Are ye so weak as to think, that after ye have embraced the Gospel of Christ, ye can become yet more perfect by observing the ceremonies of the *Jewish* law.

THIS is evidently the true meaning of the Terms, *Faith* and *Works*, the *Law* and *Grace*, the *Spirit* and the *Flesh*, in these Epistles; and under these Terms the whole design of his discourse is plainly nothing else but to show; *That*

First, THE *Jewish* Religion having proved insufficient to make men truly holy, as natural Religion also had before done, there was therefore a necessity of setting up another institution of Religion, which might be more available and effectual to that end. Now the setting up a new institution of Religion, necessarily implying the abolishing of the old, it follows that Christianity was not to be added to *Judaism*, but that *Judaism* was to be changed into Christianity, *i. e.* that the *Jewish* Religion was from thenceforward to cease, and the Christian Religion to succeed in its room: this argument the Apostle insists upon in *cb.* i, ii, v, vi, and vii. to the *Romans*, and in *cb.* i. and iv. to the *Galatians*. In *cb.* i. and ii. of the Epistle to the *Romans*, he shows that the *Jewish* Religion had proved insufficient

to make men truly holy, as the natural Religion had before done; in the *vib* *cb.* of that Epistle to the *Romans*, and in the *i*^{*st*} to the *Galatians*, he gives an account of the Institution of the Christian Religion, as more available and effectual to that end; in the *viii*^{*th*} *cb.* to the *Romans*, he shows that this new Institution of Religion necessarily implies the abolishing of the old one, and this he does from the similitude of a Woman's being bound by the Law to her Husband so long as he lives, but if her Husband be dead she is freed from the Law of her Husband; which Similitude he applies, ver. 4; *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God:* In the *iv*^{*th*} *cb.* to the *Galatians* he proves the same thing from the similitude of a young heir's being under a governour or tutor; ver. 1; *I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a Servant, tho' he be Lord of all; But is under tutors and governours until the time appointed of the father; Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons; i. e.* The Jewish Law was an Institution of Religion adapted by God in great condescension to the weak apprehensions of that people; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to institute a more perfect form of Religion, after the settlement of which in the World the former dispensation was to cease: And that it must needs do so, is evident also from the nature of the thing itself; For as after remission of Sin obtained by the sufficient

ficient Sacrifice of Christ, there needed no more legal Sacrifices to be offered for Sin; so in all other its ritual parts, the first Covenant was in course taken away by establishing the second; there being necessarily a *disannulling of the Commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof*; Heb. vii. 18. *That*

Secondly; THE Summ and Essence of all Religion is Obedience to the moral and eternal Law of God. Since therefore the ceremonies of the *Jewish* Law were never of any esteem in the Sight of God, any otherwise than as they promoted this great end, and prepared mens hearts for the reception of that more perfect Institution of religion, wherein God was to be worshipped and obeyed in Spirit and in truth; 'tis manifest that when this more perfect institution of Religion was settled, the former and more imperfect one was to cease: This argument the Apostle insists on in the i^{id} to the *Romans*, and in the iii^{id} to the *Galatians*; in the i^{id} to the *Romans*, he shows that every institution of Religion, and particularly the *Jewish*, was no otherwise of any esteem in the sight of God, than as it promoted that great end of obedience to his moral and eternal Law; For *circumcision*, says he, *verily profiteth if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law thy circumcision is made uncircumcision: therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it keep the law, judge thee who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart in the Spirit and not*

in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God ; ver. 23. to the end. In the iiid chapter to the Galatians he argues, that the Jewish religion having been thus instituted only to prepare men for that obedience to the eternal Law of God, which was to be the sum and essence of the Christian Religion ; it follows that when this latter and more perfect institution took place, there was no need of continuing the former : The Law, saith he, was added only because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made ; v. 19. and 23 : And before faith came, men having been kept under the law, shut up only unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed ; Wherefore the law was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith ; But therefore, after that faith was come, they were no longer to be under That Law. That

Thirdly ; THE Religion of Abraham was acceptable to God, before the giving of the Law ; the Scripture saying expressly that the Gospel was preached before unto Abraham : and consequently it could not but be acceptable likewise, after the abolishing of the Law.

Lastly ; THAT by the posterity of Abraham, were not meant strictly those who descended from Abraham according to the flesh ; but the children of the promise (that is, as many as are of the faith of Abraham) shall be counted for the seed : That the true religion therefore and service of God, was not to be confined always to the nation of the Jews, who were the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh ; but the Gentiles also, which believe, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith ; That is ; Those of all nations as well Gentiles as Jews, who embrace the Gospel, which is the same with

with the Religion of *Abraham*, shall be justified with faithful *Abraham*. And this Argument the Apostle insists upon in the *ixth*, *xth*, and *xith* chapters of the Epistle to the *Romans*, and in the *ivth* to the *Galatians*. These are the summ of the Arguments which the Apostle makes use of in these two Epistles, to prove against the Judaizing Christians, that there was no necessity of retaining the *Jewish* Religion together with the Christian. And from the largeness, strength, and force of these Arguments we have again another convincing proof, that the determination of this question is indeed the principal, if not the only scope and design of the Apostle in these Epistles: For nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that the Apostle should most strongly and largely demonstrate a thing which he did not design to write about at all; or on the other hand that he should design to write about a thing, and make it the subject of his Discourse, and yet prove it by such intricate and obscure arguments, as the wisest and cunningest of men should never be able to reconcile either with the rest of the Scripture, or with themselves. And these are they, who in the *ixth* chapter to the *Romans*, and in so many other mistaken places of these Epistles, are called predestinate, elect, the election, and the like.

AND now from what has been said, I shall, in order to practice, draw two or three useful inferences; and so conclude. And

1st; FROM hence it appears, that tho' the essence of Religion be eternally and immutably the same, yet the form and institution of it may be, and often has been changed. The essence of all Religion is Obedience to that moral and eternal Law, which obliges us

to imitate the Life of God in justice, mercy, and holiness, that is, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. This is the summ of natural Religion, as appears from the Discourses of those wiser Heathens, who were freest from prejudice and superstition; This was the summ of the *Jewish* Religion, as appears from the frequent and earnest protestations of God to that people, by his servants the Prophets; and this also is the summ of the Christian Religion, as *St Paul* expressly asserts; *Tit. ii. 12.* But though Religion itself be thus immutably the same, yet the form and institution thereof may be different. When natural Religion, because of its difficulty and obscurity in the present corrupt estate of human nature, proved ineffectual to make men truly religious; God left them no longer to the guidance of their reason only, but gave them first the Patriarchal and afterwards the Mosaick dispensation; and when This also, by reason of its being burden'd with so many ritual observances, proved ineffectual to the same great end, God abolished this form of Religion also, and instituted the Christian. In all which proceeding there is no reflection at all upon the immutable nature of God: For as the divine nature is in the truest and highest sense unchangeable, so Religion itself in its nature and essence is likewise unchangeable; But as the capacities, the prejudices, and the circumstances of men are different; so the institution and outward form of that Religion, which in its essence is always the same, may be and hath been changed by the good pleasure of God.

2dly; If the whole and only design of *St Paul*, in these Epistles, to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, be to prove, that God *hath* indeed made this change, of the institution, of Religion from the *Jewish* to the Christian;

tian ; and to vindicate his justice in so doing ; then we ought never so to understand any passages in these Epistles, as if the Apostle designed to magnify *one* Christian *Virtue* in opposition to all or any of the rest ; but only that he would set forth the perfection of the Virtues of the *Christian* Religion, without the ceremonies of the *Jewish*. Thus when he tells us that we are justified by faith without works, we must by no means interpret it, as some have absurdly done, of the Faith of the Christian Religion in opposition to the Works of the Christian Religion ; but of the Faith of the Gospel, in opposition to the external works of the *Jewish* Law : For so the Apostle himself expressly explains it ; *Gal. v. 6 ; In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love ; i. e.* it is now of no importance whether a man observes the works of the *Jewish* Religion or no, if he maintains but the faith and the obedience of the Christian. But as to the Works of the Christian Religion, the same Apostle every where urgeth *their* necessity, and particularly the five last chapters of the Epistle to the *Romans*, are a most earnest exhortation to be fruitful therein.

3dly ; FROM hence it follows that there is no contradiction between St *Paul* and St *James*, when the one says, that *a man is justified by faith without works*, and the other says, that *faith without works cannot justify* ; For the one speaking professedly of the works of the *Jewish* Religion, and the other of the works of the Christian, 'tis plain that the Faith of the Christian Religion may avail to justify a man without the Works of the *Jewish* Religion, which is the assertion of St *Paul* ; though it cannot do so without the works of the Christian Religion, which

which is the assertion of St *James*: So that there is no other difference between these two great Apostles, than as if a man should say, that believing the Christian Religion is sufficient to salvation without obeying the law of *Moses*, but that it cannot be so without obeying the commands of Christ.

Fourthly; F R O M hence we may infer, that when any two passages of Scripture seem contrary one to another, whereof the one be controversial and the other plain and moral; we must always endeavour to accommodate the controversial passage to the plain one, and not the plain one to the controversial. And the reason is evident; because the plain moral passage cannot be mistaken, being interpreted according to the most obvious and literal sense; but the sense of the controversial passage cannot be rightly understood, without understanding the particular controversy about which it was written.

Fifthly and Lastly; I F St *Paul* so severely treated the Judaizing Christians, as to call them perverters of the Gospel of Christ, and esteem them as preachers of another Gospel; then let us also take heed lest on the authority of men we preach or obey at any time any other Gospel, than what Christ and his Apostles preached and obeyed. If those men, who together with the simplicity and spiritual nature of the Christian Religion, would needs retain also those ceremonial observances which God himself had appointed under the *Jewish* dispensation; were accounted so much to trouble the Church of God, that the Apostle declares that though it were an *Angel* from Heaven that should preach any such doctrine, he should be accursed: then let us take care, lest in a higher degree we be found guilty of
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the same crime, if with the great and moral duties, those weightier matters of the law, we not only equal the outward and ceremonial part of Religion, but also prefer it before them; accounting ourselves sufficiently religious if we have but the *form* of Godliness, though we deny the *power* thereof. But let no man deceive you, saith St *John*; He that *doth* righteousness, and *he only*, shall be accounted righteous in the sight of God.

KOMI 1-2

SERMON VI.

The Practice of Virtue the greatest
Security against our Enemies.

1 P E T. iii. 13.

*And who is he that will harm you, if you be
followers of that which is good?*

THE Apostle having in the former part of this Chapter exhorted us to the practice of several particular duties ; proceeds in the 10th Verse, to enforce his exhortations with *such* motives, as are apt to work *most* effectually on the minds of men : He inforces it with the consideration of the *bleſſing* and *happineſs*, that attends the performance of thoſe duties. *He that will love life, ſaith he, and ſee good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that he ſpeak no guile ; let him eſcbeu evil and do good, let him ſeek peace and enſue it ; for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened unto their prayers ; but the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil.* To which words, cited out of the xxxivth Pſalm, the Apoſtle adds in the words of the Text, *And who is he that will*
harm

harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? The word in the original signifies indifferently, either *will* or *shall* harm you; and so the Text plainly contains this double proposition: That if a man be a follower of that which is good, 'tis *probable* Men *will* not have any *desire* to harm him; and if they *would*, yet 'tis *certain* no man *shall* have any *power* to do it: 'Tis the most likely method to make all men our *friends*; and if it does not that, yet 'tis the most certain security that they shall not be able to hurt us, though they be enemies.

I. *First*; IF a man be a follower of that which is good, *i. e.* a sincere practiser of universal righteousness, 'tis probable no man *will* have any *desire* to harm him. And that for these two Reasons, *1st*, because God in the wise dispensations of his Providence does frequently incline mens hearts to be favourable to those that are truly and sincerely good; And *2dly*, because Goodness does, of its own nature, tend to the gaining mens affections and making them our friends.

1st, GOD himself, in the wise Dispensations of his providence, does frequently incline mens hearts to be favourable to those who are truly and sincerely good; Whether he does this at any time directly by his own immediate power, or by the secret disposition of natural and second causes; by the interposition of more or fewer instruments; or without using any at all, is not material to enquire; for *natural* causes are but *his* Instruments. Certain it is, that he in whose hand the hearts of all men are, as the Scripture every where testifies, can, when he pleases, by *any* of these ways, give us favour in their Sight, and make even our enemies to be at peace with us.

Secondly, VIRTUE and goodness does in its own nature tend to the gaining mens affections and making them

them our friends ; it forceth necessarily a certain love and veneration from all men, and challengeth honour even from those who will not imitate what they are forced to respect ; So that he who is truly and sincerely virtuous, must be, as most certainly acceptable to God, so in all probability approved of men. *Prov. iii. 3, 4 ; Let not mercy and truth forsake thee ; bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart : So shalt thou find favour and good understanding, in the sight of God and Man.* The practice of Virtue and true Religion, is a conformity to those eternal rules of justice and righteousness, which are as unchangeable as the difference of Good and Evil, being founded in the nature of God and of things : 'Tis also an imitation of the Actions of God himself. And as no man is so stupid as not to admire the perfections of the divine nature, when he considers them abstractedly in God, so he cannot but pay a proportionable respect to whatever he sees bear their resemblance in men. Hence virtue is of all things upon Earth the most lovely and venerable ; approving itself, whether men will or no, to their reason and judgment : And especially where it is most conspicuous : as in the Lives of virtuous and religious Governours, who then most illustriously appear the true Vice-gerents of God, when That Power which they receive *from* him, they imploy and exercise in imitation of him. But 'tis likewise true in proportion, even in the *meanest* persons ; that Virtue and Piety, wherever they are found, necessarily command esteem and honour : And this not only from good and religious men ; but even vicious persons themselves, tho' they will not *do* righteousness, yet commonly they cannot forbear giving it its true character and commendation in others. The Officers who were sent out by the Pharisees to ap-

prehend our Saviour, could not forbear declaring, that he spake as never man spake; and the *Roman Governour*, when he gave Sentence that he should be crucified, could not at the same instant forbear openly professing that he found no fault in him. The very worst of men cannot chuse but have a *good Opinion* of that virtue, which the dominion of their lusts will not *suffer them to practice, or which their present temporal Interest* compels them to discountenance. In any business of importance, much rather would they imploy a righteous and conscientious person, than any of the companions and partakers of their Vices. In a word; they cannot but frequently wish that they themselves were the men they are not; and pray with *Balaam*, that though they imitate not the *life*, yet at least they might *die the death of the Righteous, and that their last end might be like his.*

FURTHER, Religion and Virtue *must* naturally tend to the gaining mens affections and making them our friends; because it renders a man evidently both a profitable member of the publick, and likewise useful to all men in whatever *private* relation they stand to him. It makes him modest and humble, peaceable and submissive to his *superiours*, in all just and reasonable instances. To his *equals* he is just and faithful, using all plainness and sincerity in his dealings: In his conversation injuring and abusing no man; but with gentleness and forgiveness, melting the hearts even of his enemies, and making them to be at peace with him. To his *inferiours* he is gentle and condescending; not oppressing the weak, nor dealing hardly with those that are under his Power; but encouraging them by his example in the ways of Virtue, and in all kind of exigencies, assisting and relieving them to the utmost of his Ability. This

is the behaviour of a truly religious person in all relations; a behaviour, which not only gains esteem as far as its good effects actually extend, but which raises admiration in us even when we meet with it in the History of past and far distant ages, where 'tis manifest we can have no concern for the events of things, nor prejudices concerning the Characters of Persons: Nay, which we cannot but commend, even though it happens to be *against* our present Interest; for the same reason, as on the contrary men cannot but hate base Actions and dislike unworthy Persons, even at the same time that perhaps they profit by them. But here it is obvious to inquire; If these things be so, how then comes it to pass that good men have so often been hated and persecuted in the world? How comes it to pass that men zealous and eminent for Piety, have in all ages suffered so much upon the account of Virtue and true Religion? Upon this it may be proper to observe, 1st, that All sufferings even of men zealously religious, are not upon the account of God and Religion. If men through heat and false Zeal, factiously at any time disturb the peace, the order and quiet of their Country; if they seditiously oppose lawful Authority, and spread Doctrines inconsistent with civil Government, or with good Manners; such as are several of the principles, and has frequently been the practice of the Church of *Rome*; and be punished for so doing; this is not suffering for Virtue's sake. 2^{dly}, 'Tis to be observed, that when the best and most truly pious men are hated and persecuted, 'tis not because Virtue itself is not always amiable, but because the persecutors mistake through their own wicked prejudices, and look upon the best of men as profane and irreligious. Of this kind were all the persecutions of the best and purest Christians in the primitive times: 'Tis certain these men were eminently virtuous and religious,

and 'tis certain they suffered merely upon that account ; but then 'tis also as certain, that those by whom they suffered, did not persecute them because they thought them religious, but because through their own Idolatrous and wicked prejudices they took them for persons most profane. They did not persecute them because they thought them to be worshippers of the *true* God, but because they found them to be despisers of their *false* ones. This made them implacably persecute that Doctrine, the evidence and conviction, the Holiness and Excellency of which, if they would have opened their eyes, they could not possibly have resisted. Another Reason likewise why the best of Men may be insulted and persecuted, is because it may happen to serve a present private interest of those who oppress them ; notwithstanding that at the same time it cannot be denied, but in their judgment and conscience they must honour and respect them. This was plainly the case, in the condemnation of our Saviour. He was manifestly innocent of the crimes laid to his charge, and *Pilate* knew him to be so ; but then 'tis also manifest that he did not condemn him because he was innocent, but because he was willing to do the *Jews* a pleasure. Our Saviour's innocence was sufficient to convince the mind of his Judge, and 'twas only interest that prevailed over the force of that conviction. But 3^{dly}, Supposing none of these to be the case ; and that good men are sometimes persecuted and hated for this very reason only because they are known to *be* such ; (which I think rarely happens :) yet *still*, (as in all moral Maxims, 'tis sufficient if they hold true for the greater part,) yet *still*, I say, Virtue is undoubtedly the most direct, the *most* certain and effectual means in the world, to gain the love and favour of all men, tho' possibly it may sometimes fail

of

of obtaining that effect. *A soft answer*, saith *Solomon*, *turneth away wrath*, and 'tis certain that 'tis the most probable way to do it; though there may perhaps be some men in the world of so ill a disposition, that they will rather be inflamed than softened by the gentlest Entreaties. In like manner 'tis visible there may be, and 'tis too certain there have been and are some persons of so very ill a Spirit, that they will hate and persecute a righteous man for no other reason, but because they know him to be so: And therefore it must not be affirmed that religion and piety will every where at all times certainly and infallibly gain the favour and good-will of all men, but only that 'tis the most probable and rational means that can possibly be used to that end, and that in most cases it really does so, though it will indeed sometimes prove otherwise. For this reason the Apostle, when he had said in the words of the Text, *Who is he that will harm you if ye followers of that which is good?* adds immediately in the next words, *But and if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terrour, neither be troubled; i. e.* if ye be truly virtuous and religious, 'tis probable and you may reasonably expect that men will love and respect you, but if it should happen otherwise, as it will sometimes do; if you should be hated and persecuted for Righteousness sake, let not this trouble or disquiet you; yea, rather think yourselves happy, that you are accounted worthy to suffer for God, that is, for Virtue or Truth's sake; who can and will deliver you in his good time from your enemies, or if he does it not in this world, will reward you abundantly in the next. For,

II. *Secondly*; If we be followers of that which is good, 'tis certain no man, whatever his *will* be, shall have any *power* to do us any real harm; The Truth

of which may appear from the following considerations.

1st, THAT the providence of God does in a peculiar manner watch over the Righteous, to preserve them under all Events. *The Eyes of the Lord*, says Solomon, *are in every place beholding the evil and the good*; Prov. xv. 3. As he at first created, so he still upholds, and rules all things by the word of his power; He orders and governs all the motions in the great fabric of the world, and directs the operations of all causes to the effecting his designs. Whom he protects, no force or counsel can hurt; *for he breaketh the arms of the mighty, and bringeth the counsel of the wicked to nought*. When Sennacherib the Assyrian came against Jerusalem with that mighty host, he could *put his bow in his nose, and his bridle in his lips, and cause him to return by the same way that he came*; and when Balak King of Moab, trusting more to his Policy than Strength, sent for Balaam to curse the Israelites, he could turn that curse into a blessing: So that there was no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. Indeed the whole history of the Jewish nation, from the coming out of Egypt, to their final captivity, is one continued and eminent instance of providence watching over the righteous. *In the wilderness God led them like sheep, and kept them as the apple of his eye*; He suffered no man to do them wrong, but *reproved even Kings for their sake*. When they came to enter into the promised Land, no force was able to stand before them; and when they were possessed of it, no nation was able to drive them out. Particularly when the whole body of them went up to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord thrice in the year, their land was by a peculiar providence preserved from being invaded, as was promised them, *Exod. xxxiv. 24*. In a word; so long as they kept God's Commandments, so that

that *he did not behold iniquity in Jacob, neither had seen perverseness in Israel*; they were constantly happy and dwelt safely; and though we often read indeed that they were oppressed by their enemies and brought to great distress, yet this never happened but when they had first departed from their integrity; which made *Moses* break out into that affectionate exclamation, *Deut. xxxii. 30*; *How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up!* Now the same Providence that preserves whole nations, watches likewise proportionably over single persons; For so we read of *David*, *2 Sam. viii. 6*, *that the Lord preserved him whithersoever he went*; And though under the Gospel dispensation, where immortality is more clearly brought to light, and the promise of eternal life more express; temporal rewards and protection do not so constantly attend the Righteous; yet does Providence by no means wholly neglect them even *here*: But God's eyes are still upon the ways of man, and he seeth all their goings. *Are not two Sparrows*, says our Saviour, *sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*; *St Matt. x. 29.*

2dly; The enemies of a righteous man cannot do him any real harm, because they cannot take from him any thing wherein his true and proper Happiness consists. His Happiness consists in imitating God, the Fountain and Spring of *all* Happiness; and by copying out the divine perfections in a holy life, to become partaker of the divine nature: Nor can any thing possibly make him miserable; but what separates him from the favour and from the likeness of God. Christians indeed are not Stoicks, nor can they be altogether insensible of what happens to them in the present life; so that did
they

they wholly depend on that presence of mind, that sufficiency which Virtue does of its own nature furnish the Soul with, it must after all be confessed, that the troubles and calamities of this life, notwithstanding all the boasts of some vain-glorious Philosophers, would be very grievous to them. But then if all these afflictions shall be abundantly recompensed to them both in this world and the next; if there be no man who has left father or mother, or houses or lands, for Christ's sake, who shall not in this present state receive not only equivalents but an hundred-fold, and in the end eternal life; where *then* is the real mischief of these losses? Persecution may deprive such persons of their present possessions; but it cannot despoil them of those *bags that wax not old, that treasure laid up for them in the heavens, where moth and rust corrupt not, and where thieves break not through and steal.* It may deprive them of all the comforts of this life, and even life itself; but it cannot hinder them of that eternal inheritance, the joyful expectation of which keeps them from being miserable here, as the enjoyment of it will make them for ever happy hereafter. For in the

3^d and last place, Whatever loss a good man sustains in the world upon the account of his concern for Truth and Virtue, shall be abundantly made good to him in that which is to come; and consequently 'tis so far from doing him any real harm, that it ought rather to be accounted a Gain than a Loss. *For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 2 Cor. iv. 17: and St Paul accounts, Rom. viii. 18; that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* The new Testament is every where exceeding full and expresses in
this

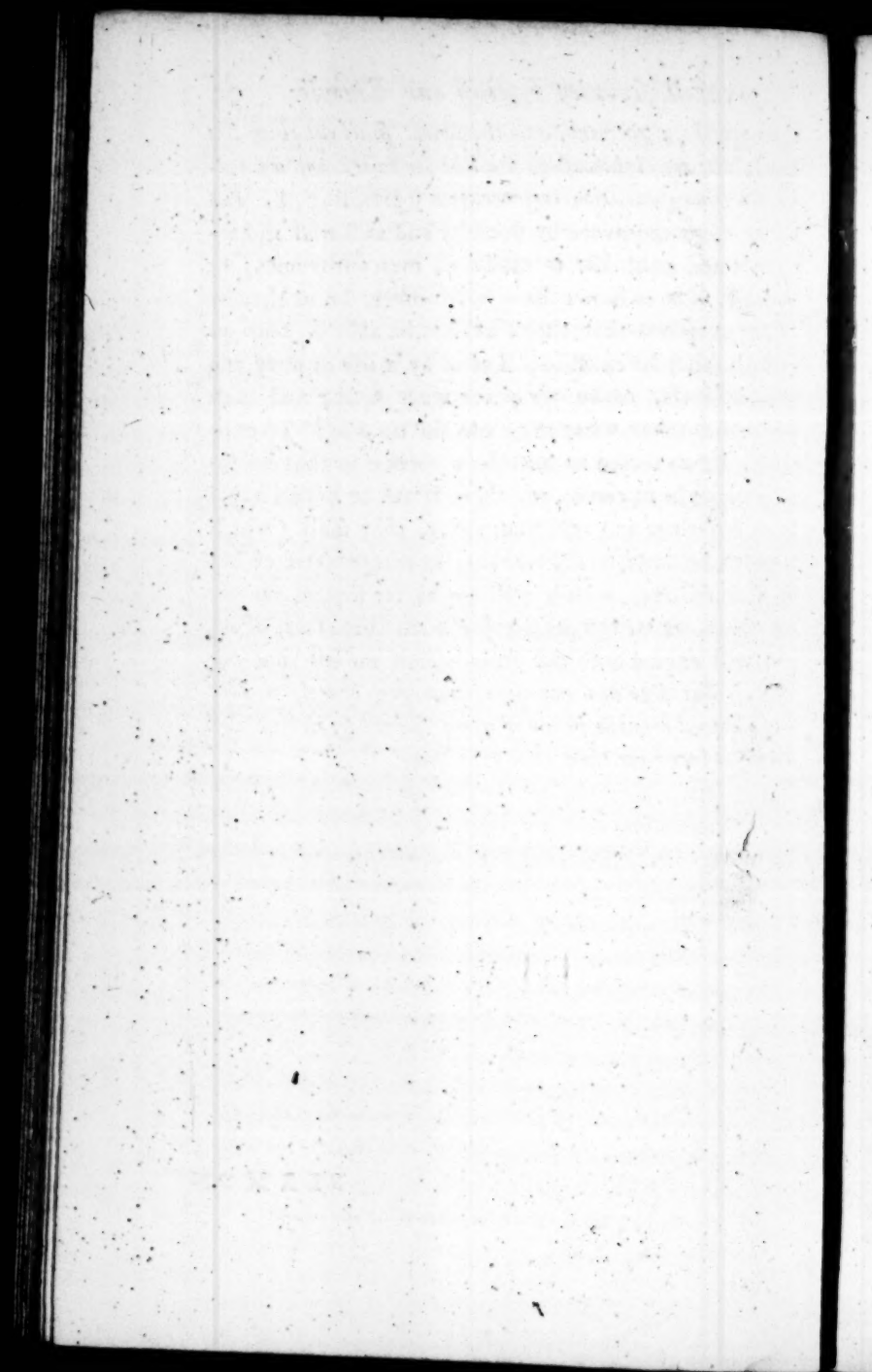
this matter ; though indeed in the Old Testament these promises are not so very clear ; The reason whereof, seems to be this. The *Jews* were a peculiar nation chosen of God to be a standing instance of his providence in the government of the world, and of his rewarding Virtue and punishing Vice ; the promises therefore and threatnings upon their obedience or disobedience, were made to that nation considered as a body politick, and therefore must of necessity have been such as could belong to a nation as such, and be conspicuous to the world ; *i. e.* they must needs have been temporal. That national Sins can be punished only with temporal punishments, is not indeed a just observation : Because national Sins are nothing but the Sins of the particular persons that constitute a Nation ; and therefore may receive their particular punishment in a future state. But such rewards or punishments of a Nation, as are intended to be *Instances of God's providence in this World*, and Evidences of his governing a People, these 'tis manifest must of necessity be temporal. And this was plainly the case of the *Jews*, considered as a Nation. Of a future state, where every individual person in particular, should be rewarded or punished according to his private behaviour, they had *sufficient* proof, from those daily and undeniable evidences which they peculiarly had of the Being and Providence of God ; from God's Dealings with the patriarchs ; from the typical and figurative interpretation of their temporal promises ; and from the preaching of their Prophets. But now the Gospel-dispensation not being made to any particular nation or body of men as such, but to all individual Persons ; the blessings promised to obedience and the curses threatned to disobedience were to be such as concerned particular persons only ; and therefore might as well
relate

relate to the future state as the present. Hence rewards and punishments are not so equally distributed in this life; that future state being more clearly and fully discovered, wherein all inequalities of this kind shall be set right, and where God has promised that they who suffer with Christ, shall be also glorified with him: So far therefore are wicked men from being able to hurt those who are followers of that which is good, that even when they think they have gained their purpose, and have it in their power to satisfy their malice to the utmost; they even then contribute to the happiness of those pious and religious persons, whom they intend to make miserable.

THE Application of what has been said, is evident. If by a sincere endeavour after the performance of our duty in the general course of our lives, we have made God our friend; we are taught not to be afraid of any thing else. Let us trust in *him* for deliverance under *Any* sort of affliction whatsoever, who is abundantly able; and hath promised that he *will* preserve us, so that nothing shall by any means hurt us. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most high*, saith the Psalmist, *i. e.* he that feareth God, *shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; i. e.* under his secure protection. *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence; He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust, his truth shall be thy shield and buckler; Psal. xci. ver. 1: and Job v. 19, &c. He shall deliver thee from six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from Death; and in War, from the Power of the Sword. Thou shalt be hid from the Scourge of the Tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of Destruction when it cometh. And fear ye not the reproach of men, saith the Prophet; neither be afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them*

greatest security against our Enemies. 95

them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation; Isai. li. 7, 8. Let us therefore endeavour by sincerity and universal righteousness and goodness, to make all men our friends; or at least, if it will not have that effect, let us thereby secure ourselves that they shall not be able to hurt us though they be enemies; Let us by a life of piety and true holiness, make our peace with God; and then we need not fear what men can do unto us: To conclude, let us secure to ourselves a portion in that happiness which is to come, and then, if we be not delivered from sufferings and afflictions here, they shall (which is much better than deliverance) be compensated at last by that felicity, which will go as far beyond our expectation, as all temporal enjoyments come short of it; and will exceed even our imagination no less than our hope. For Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.



SERMON VII.

Of the Nature and Extent of false
Witness.

PROV. xxiv. 28, 29.

*Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour without
Cause, and deceive not with thy Lips: Say
not, I will do to Him, as He hath done to Me;
I will render to the man according to his
Works.*

THERE is nothing generally more dear and
valuable to men, than their reputation or good
Name: *Prov. xxii. 1; A good name is rather
to be chosen than great Riches, and loving Favour ra-
ther than silver and gold.* The Esteem of wise and good
men, is the greatest of all *Temporal* Encouragements
to Virtue; and 'tis a Mark of an abandoned Spirit, to
have no Regard to it. One case indeed there is, where-
in the opinion of the World is not to be regarded:
Which is, when the Circumstances of things are such,
that the adhering to *Truth and Virtue* will necessarily ex-
pose a man to the Reproaches of *ill men*, and to the

mistaken Censures of Many also who perhaps otherwise are good. In *This* case, *Blessed are ye*, says our Saviour, *when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven; For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* Matt. v. 11. But in all other cases Reputation or a good Name is justly to be valued. 'Tis what the wisest and best men, have always been very tender of preserving in themselves; and what good Christians ought therefore to make great Conscience of taking wrongfully from Others. In some Instances, a clear reputation has been esteemed more valuable even than Life itself; and, in many circumstances, despoiling men of their good name, is in effect the same thing as defrauding them of their Property. So much reputation, is always so much Power; and according to mens Esteem and Credit in the World, so much proportionably is their Influence and the Weight they have in it. For the same reasons therefore, that we are obliged not to injure our Neighbour in his Person or Property; for the same reasons ought we to be very tender, of his good name and reputation: Always having a just Regard to Truth and Charity, and to the Benefit and Advantage of the Publick. *Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour without Cause, and deceive not with thy Lips: Say not, I will do to Him, as He has done to Me; I will render to the Man according to his Works.*

Who is meant by our Neighbour, in *This* and all other Precepts of the like nature; our Saviour has explained to us in Parable of the good Samaritan. Where, by declaring Him to be the afflicted man's Neighbour, who, though a Stranger, though a Foreigner, though of a different Sect and Party from him both in religion and

and polity, yet assisted and saved him in a time of extreme distress; he shows us that our *Neighbours*, in the Sense of the divine Precepts, are not Those only who dwell near us, or with whom we chance to have particular *Acquaintance*, or who are of the same *Self* or denomination with ourselves; but *whomsoever* among all *Mankind* we have any Concern with; *whomsoever* it happens at any time to be in our Power either to injure or do kindness to; in a word, *whosoever* can in any respect become the better or the worse, or receive any Hurt or any Benefit, by our Behaviour towards them. This is the meaning of the word, *Neighbour*, in Scripture-language, and in the religious estimation of things: and in *This* sense 'tis to be understood in the Text, and in all other moral exhortations; *Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour without cause, and deceive not with thy Lips.*

THE word which we here render, *deceive*; signifies, in the original, any damage, any inconvenience, brought upon a man in the way of slander, calumny, back-biting, or any other injurious manner of representing him. The sense of the expression is the same, as in That Other Passage in the same book, ch. xxvi. 18; *As a mad-man who casteth Fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his Neighbour*, (that is, who revileth, defameth, or leads his Neighbour into Any Mischief,) and saith, *Am not I in sport?*

THE Meaning of the particular Phrases in the Text, being thus explained; I shall, in the following Discourse, *First*, set forth the *Nature and Extent* of the Sin here forbidden; together with the proper limitation of the Cases and Circumstances, to which it does or does not extend. And *Secondly*, I shall alledge the suit-

able *Reasons and Motives*, which ought to influence our Practice in this matter. *Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour without cause, and deceive not with thy Lips: Say not, I will do to Him, as He has done to Me; I will render to the man according to his Works.*

I. First; IN the first place, the Highest and most enormous degree of the Sin here forbidden, is the deliberately giving *false evidence* in judicial matters, whether *criminal*, or in cases relating to *Property*. *Exod. xxiii. 1; Put not thine hand with the wicked, to be an unrighteous Witness.* This is a wickedness of so high a nature, and in which it is so impossible for any man's conscience to be deceived; that no man can be guilty of it in Any case, who has at all even the least *Pretence* or *Appearance* of Religion. We find an Instance of it in *Abab's* consenting to the instructions given by *Jezabel* against *Naboth*, *1 Kings xxi. 10; Set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear Witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the King; and then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.* The Character given by the Prophet upon which account, *ver. 20; is, that he had Sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.*

ANOTHER degree of the Vice condemned in the Text is when men bear false Testimony against their Brethren, not indeed with the Solemnity of a judicial accusation before the Magistrate, but after a more secret manner, in private conversation; spreading *knowingly and maliciously, False Reports* concerning any person, either for some *Private Advantage* to Themselves, or out of *Envy* towards Him, or in way of *Revenge* for some conceived *Disobligation*. This is the case supposed in the Text: *Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour without Cause: — Say not, I will do to Him, as He has done*

done to Me; I will render to the Man according to his Works. But whether *Revenge*, or whatever else, be the *Temptation* to the Practice; the nature of the Sin itself is of the deepest Die, and condemned among the most detestable Crimes both by Reason and Scripture. All Lyars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone; Rev. xxi. 8. And Our Saviour, who never spake with Severity, but against Great Crimes; told the Pharisees, when they spread false and malicious Accusations against him, that they imitated herein *their Father the Devil*, Joh. viii. 44; That the Devil was himself a Lyar from the Beginning; a Lyar, in the sense of spreading false Accusations; (so the word, *Διδόλῃ*, properly signifies:) And that he was the Father, and Promoter, of it in Others.

BUT further, there are still lower degrees of the Fault reproved in the Text; which, as they are less scandalous in the eye of the World, and less shocking to inconsiderate Minds, so there is more danger of mens falling into them, and greater Care needful to preserve ourselves from the guilt of them. Of This kind, is the careless and rash Custom of spreading censorious and uncharitable Reports to the disadvantage of Our Neighbour, without at all knowing whether there be any Truth in the accusation, or any just Ground and Foundation for the Censure. Under which Head, come innumerable sorts of Calumny, Detraction, Slander, Evil-speaking, Back-biting, Tale-bearing, rash Judgment, and the like. In which matters, the Occasions, upon which it is very incident even to those who are not of malicious Tempers, to be faulty through Negligence, and Want of Care and Attention; the Occasions, I say, which lead men to be faulty in This particular, are, in the course of common life, so perpetually returning;

that the Scripture represents That person as a very perfect man indeed, who can be continually upon his Guard against This Errour. *In many things* (says the Apostle) *we offend all: If any man offend not in Word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the Whole Body.* The Author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus had before made the same observation, *ch. xix. 16; There is one that slippeth in his Speech, but not from his Heart; and who is He that hath not offended with his tongue?* The Psalmist in like manner, *Pf. xv. 1; Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy Holy Hill? Even — He that has used no deceit in his tongue, — and hath not slandered his Neighbour.* The Caution therefore he thought necessary, to preserve himself from This Surprise, is very remarkable: *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue: And, Set a Watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my Lips; Pf. cxli. 3.* Without great consideration and habitual seriousness, the perpetual Incidents of This temptation will betray men into Folly; and *In multitude of words there wanteth not Sin: Prov. x. 19.*

Lastly, THE Last and Lowest Degree of the Fault we are now considering, is when men are censorious towards their Brethren, in spreading abroad things *neither false nor dubious, but certainly true; yet needlessly, and contrary to the Laws of Charity:* Declaring their Neighbour's *real* Infirmities, or *real* Faults, to his Disadvantage; without serving the purpose of Any true Benefit, either to Him or Others. This Practice was Thus forbidden under the Law, *Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy people; Levit. xix. 16.* And though the words of my Text, 'tis evident, have principal Regard to *false* accusation; yet literally and very properly they extend also

also to *uncharitable Truth*: *Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour, without Cause.*

I NDEED, in all Cases where either the Administration of *publick Justice*, or the manifest Benefit and Advantage of *Private good Christians*, requires it; In all *These* cases, 'tis mens *Duty* to accuse Criminals of all Sorts, and to bear Testimony against them in Righteousness and Truth: But in *other* cases, 'tis evidently a Breach of Christian Charity, to take delight in spreading even *True Reports needlessly*, to the Damage or Disadvantage of our Neighbour. In matters of *Private Offence*, 'tis the part of a Christian, *privately* to reprove the person offending: And the Benefit of so doing, may be very great. *Ecclus xix. 13; Admonish a friend, it may be be hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admonish thy Friend, it may be he hath not said it; and if he have, that he speak it not again. If thy Brother (says our Saviour) shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more. — And if he shall neglect to hear Them, tell it unto the Church.* That is: Use all possible means, in the privatest and most friendly manner, to amend and reform him: But if *This Method* proves unsuccessful, then tell it to the Church, tell it to the Congregation, tell it to a Number of serious and well-disposed Christians; still for the *Benefit of the person reprov'd*; that by the Advice and Exhortation of *Many*, he may be brought to Repentance. This is a thing very different from publishing mens Faults in ordinary conversation; Wherein generally there is No View, of amending the *person censured*; but merely of satisfying the Envy, Malice, Weakness, or vain Humour, of those who are apt to imagine they can build

up to *Themselves* an *Esteem* upon the *Faults* of *Others*. Nevertheless, even in common *conversation*, the Characters of Persons are not to be confounded, as if no Difference was to be made between *Virtue* and *Vice*: But the sense of what has been said, is, that Christians ought to be so far from bearing at any time *false* testimony against their Brethren, that, where no real Honour can be done to *Virtue*, or Discredit to *Vice*, they ought not to take pleasure even in *Truth* uncharitable and not needful to be exposed.

HAVING thus at large explained the *Nature and Extent* of the *Sin* forbidden in the Text, and set forth the proper *Limitations* of the Cases and Circumstances to which it *does* or *does not extend*; Which was the *First* thing I proposed: It remains now in the

II. *Second* place, that I proceed to lay before you some of the principal *Reasons* or *Motives*, which ought to influence our Practice in this Matter. *Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour without cause, and deceive not with thy Lips.* And

1st; FROM the very *nature* and *constitution* of *human Society*, there arises originally, in the reason of things, a strong argument why men ought to govern their *Words* as well as their *Actions*. For by the mutual intercourse of *Both*, is human Society preserved; and by injurious *Speech*, as well as by unjust *Actions*, is That general Trust and Confidence, That mutual Charity and Good-Will destroyed, on which depends the Welfare and Happiness of Mankind. This Argument is urged by *St Paul*, Eph. iv. 25; *Putting away Lying, speak every man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another.* The constitution of every humane Society, bears some Analogy to the Frame of the Natural Body: And as, in the *natural Body*, all Division, Disagreement, and disunion of the *Members*, tends necessarily

to the destruction and dissolution of the *Whole*; so, in proportion, in all *Communities* and *Societies* of men whatsoever, the *Contentions* and *Animosities*, the *Disorders* and *Distractions*, arising from *Slander*, *Calumny*, *Detraction*, *Uncharitableness*, and other Instances of licentious Speech, are inevitably of very pernicious effect. *The Tongue*, says *St James*, (ch. iii. 5, 8,) is a little member, and boasteth great Things: Behold, how great a matter, a little fire kindleth: — it is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poison.

Of mischievous consequence it often is, to the person himself who indulgeth this Folly: *Prov.* xviii. 7; xii. 13; xiii. 3; *A fool's Mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his Soul. — The wicked is snared by the transgression of his Lips. He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips, shall have destruction.* The Wise Authors of the Books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclus*, express themselves excellently upon This Head: *The Ear of Jealousy heareth all things, and the Noise of Murmurings is not hid: Therefore — refrain your tongue from Backbiting; for there is no word so secret, that shall go for nought; and the mouth that belietb, slayeth the Soul, Wis. i. 10. He that can rule his tongue, shall live without strife; and he that bateth babbling, shall have less evil: Rehearse not unto another, that which is told unto thee; and thou shalt fare never the worse: Whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens Lives; and if thou canst without Offence, reveal them not: For he heard and observed thee; and, when time cometh, he will hate thee: If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burst thee. Ec. xix. 16.* The natural Punishment therefore of a licentious and unbridled Tongue, is the *Inconveniencies* it is very apt to bring, in the course of things, upon the Person himself. He that will love life,
and

and see good days, (he that will avoid innumerable Snares and Troubles which careless men bring upon themselves;) let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile; 1 Pet. iii. 10: Otherwise, he will inevitably bring upon himself an uneasy and unquiet Life.

THIS is the natural ill consequence of this Practice, to the persons themselves who are guilty of it: But the Sinfulness of it appears principally in the Damage it does secretly to Others. Slander, and uncharitable Defamation, is a *Pestilence that walketh in Darkness*; and a secret Stab, against which there is many times no possibility of Defence. Prov. xviii. 8; *The words of a Tale-bearer are as Wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the Belly.* Again, (ch. xxvi. 18;) *As a mad-man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth, (the man that revileth, that defameth) his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport? As a matter of sport or diversion, he may foolishly make light of it; but the ill consequences thereof are greater than can be foreseen. The Beginning of Strife, says the wise man, is as when one letteth cut Water: And, As Coals are to burning Coals, and Wood to Fire; so is a contentious man to kindle Strife.*

THIS is an Argument drawn from the very Nature and Constitution of human Society in general. But

2dly; ANOTHER and a more powerful Motive to oblige men to restrain *licentious Speech*, is the consideration of the inconsistency of it with a due Sense of religion. *If any man among you, saith St James, seem to be religious; and bridletb not his tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart, That man's religion is vain.* ch. i. 26. The reason is, because a principal part of *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this*; that men approve themselves

themselves by a good conversation, with meekness of Wisdom. If therefore, says he, ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the Truth: — For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil Work*. In like manner the Apostle St Paul, among things inconsistent with, and contrary to, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness; reckons up envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and the like; 1 Tim. vi. 4. And accordingly exhorts, Eph. iv. 31; Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice; And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Nay, even in matters which might in themselves seem to be of smaller importance, and comparatively speaking, scarce to be taken Notice of; yet because, in consequence, they quench the Spirit of religion, and dissipate the Effect and Influence of serious consideration, therefore he reproveth with great severity such persons as learn to be idle; 1 Tim. v. 13; wandering about from house to house, being Tatlers and Busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.

3dly and lastly; Another Argument against Calumny and Detraction, and particularly against That Censoriousness which too naturally arises from Differences in opinion; is the consideration of ourselves being All of us subject to error. What our Saviour said to the Pharisees in Another case, He that is without Sin amongst you, let him first cast a Stone at her; may no less justly be applied to This; He that is infallibly secured against all Errours Himself, let him be as censorious as he pleases upon the Mistakes of Others. And if it be upon matters relating to Religion, that the Reproach and Defamation

* Jam. iii. 14. 16.

tion is founded; the Fault is still the greater, and the more inexcusable; because 'tis presumptuously anticipating the judgment of God towards *Others*, and provoking him the more severely to judge *Us*. I speak not here of the ill Character, which *is* and *ought* to be given of all *Open Vice* and *manifest Unrighteousness*. But men who have different *Notions* and *Apprehensions* of Things, are very apt to cast Reproach upon each other, not for their *Vices*, but for their Different *Understandings*. And the same Frailty, which in a man of the same *Sect or Party*, shall be no Blemish at all; shall, in a person of a different *Party*, be the most unpardonable Crime. The *Jews* thought every Fault in a *Samaritan* or a *Gentile*, to be infinitely greater than in one of their own Nation; and the smallest *Mote* in another's Eye, seemed much larger to them than a *Beam* in their own. This is what St Paul reproves, *Rom. ii. 1*; *Tbou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; (speaking of a Jew condemning a Gentile) for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself.* But This relates to *Real Faults*. The greater and still more inexcusable degree of this Partiality is, when men cast reproach and contempt upon Others for what is truly commendable, for doing what perhaps was their *Duty* to do; for being wiser, or more charitable, or more scrupulous and conscientious than Themselves. Of This, St Paul speaks, *Rom. xiv. 4*; *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his Own Master he standeth or falleth?* St James calls it, *judging the Law itself*; *ch. iv. 11*; *He that speaketh evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law.* — *There is one law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy: Who art thou, that judgest another? Our Saviour forbids this censoriousness towards*

towards Others, under the penalty of being more ſtrictly judged Ourſelves: Judge not, that ye be not judged. And if concerning opprobrious and reproachful language to a man's face, he ſays, *Whoſoever ſhall ſay unto his Brother, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of bell-fire; much more againſt malicious Back-biting and uncharitable Detraction*, would he have uſed the like ſeverity of expreſſion. The reaſon is; becauſe ſuch kind of *Detraction* and *Defamation* is really more injurious, and more difficult to be guarded againſt, and of more extenſive Effect, than many other ways of doing wrong to our Neighbour. I conclude therefore with that Declaration of our Lord, *Mat. xii. 36; I ſay unto you, that every idle word, (that is, as appears evidently in the context, every malicious word) that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the Day of Judgement: For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.*

SERMON VIII.

Of the Sin of deliberate Fraud.

ACTS v. 3, 4.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this Thing in thine Heart? Thou hast not lied unto Men, but unto God.

IN the three fore-going Chapters of This Book, we have an Account given us of the Simplicity and Purity of that Primitive Church, which was planted immediately by the *Apostles themselves* upon their being inspired with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost and flourished in the very Beginning even of *Their Days*. And the Character we find of it, is such; as contains both a most just Reproof of the decaying Piety of Christians in succeeding Ages, and at the same time

affords us a lovely and Venerable Idea of the sincere and uncorrupt Manners of those Primitive Disciples. Ch. ii. ver. 42; *They continued steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of Bread and in Prayers.* Ver. 44; *And all that believed, were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and good, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.* Expecting, as it appears, a speedy Destruction of the Jewish Nation, and being as yet but a few scattered People, they agreed among themselves to sell every one what he had, and put it into one publick Stock, to be employed in furnishing out such as were to be sent abroad in the service of preaching the Gospel, and to be distributed likewise for the Maintenance of them that continued in *Jerusalem* according to every man's Wants and Necessities. Ver. 46; *And they continued daily with one Accord in the Temple;* their Practice being, constantly to frequent the Temple at the usual Hours of publick Prayer: *And breaking bread from House to House,* (In the House, it should be translated; The Meaning is; meeting together in their Private Assembly to receive the Communion among themselves, after they had prayed in publick with the Jews;) *they did eat their meat with gladness and Singleness of Heart: Praising God and having Favour with all the People;* that is, by their Innocency and Simplicity of Manners, obtaining the good Opinion of all well disposed and unprejudiced Persons: According to that Admonition of St. Paul, Rom. xiv. 17; *The Kingdom of God, is—Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost; For he that in These things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of Men.* At the latter End of the ivth Chapter, as an Introduction to the History whereof my Text is a part, the same Character

rafter of that *Primitive Apostolical Church*, is repeated in other Words: *Ver. 32; And the Multitude of them that believed, were of one Heart, and of one Soul; living in perfect Love, and entire Unity among themselves; every one being more sollicitous to provide for the Necessities of others, than to lay up any thing in store for Himself; neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed, was his own, but they had all things common. Ver. 33; And great Grace was upon them all; That is, as 'tis before expressed, ch. ii. 47, they had great Favour with all the People: For in the original 'tis the very same Word in both places; Great Grace was upon them all; and, they had great Favour with all the people: (Which is a Phrase of the same import, with That in Luke. ii. 52; And Jesus increased in Wisdom and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man.) Ver. 34; Neither were there any among them, that lacked; For as many as were Possessors of Lands or Houses, sold them, and brought the Prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles feet; and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need. Not that there was any absolute Obligation or express Command upon any Man so to do; But expecting, as I before observed, a speedy Destruction of the *Jewish Nation*, according to our Saviour's Prophecy; and being themselves a scattered and persecuted Body of Men; and having their Hearts filled with a most excellent spirit of universal Love and Charity; they either All, or at least most of them, voluntarily agreed to sell what they had; and, putting it into the Apostles hands, they were for the future equally maintained out of it, as by a publick Stock. And great was the Sincerity and Simplicity of Heart, wherewith the whole Body of the first Believers exercised this*

universal Benevolence. But, as even among the *Apostles themselves* there had been *One Son of Perdition*; and in the very best and most excellent Institutions Offences *will* arise; so even *here* also there was an Attempt made, to introduce a Corruption. For one, *Ananias* with his Wife *Sapphira*, ver. 1. of this chapter, having sold a Possession, kept back part of the price and brought a certain part, and laid it at the *Apostles feet*; intending thereby so to impose upon the Apostles, as to be maintained, like the other Disciples, out of the publick Stock of the Church, and yet at the same time retain a private portion of their Estate for themselves. Upon this therefore St Peter replies unto them in the Words of the Text; *Ananias, why has Satan filled thine Heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine Heart? Thou hast not lied unto Men, but unto God.* In the following Discourse upon which Words, I shall first consider briefly in general, what the Crime was, wherewith *Ananias* is here charged by the Apostle. Secondly, I shall consider the several Circumstantial Aggravations of the Crime, in His Case in particular. And Thirdly, I shall draw some practical Observations, which may be of perpetual Use to us, from the several Expressions contained in the Text.

I. First; I am to consider in general, what the Crime was, wherewith *Ananias* is here charged by the Apostle. And this is so plainly express'd in the Words of the Text, that I suppose no man, who has read this History without a Comment, ever mistook it. The Foundation of his Crime, was Covetousness; the Effect of that Covetousness, was Diffidence, or a Distrust of that Maintenance,

nance, which he was to enjoy in common with the whole Church; and the actual *Crime itself*, which that Diffidence or covetous Disposition put him upon committing, and which in the Text is more immediately charged upon him, is *Fraud: A Fraudulent Attempt* to deceive the Apostles, and the whole Church, by putting himself upon them to be maintained out of the Publick Expence, whilst at the same Time he retained privately to himself, that which ought to have been put into the publick Stock, in order to intitle him to receive out of it his common Proportion. *Others* brought all that they had, and put it into the Apostle's Hands; and were by Them accordingly taken care of, as those who had nothing left in their private Possession: *This Man*, to make a double Advantage to himself, kept back *one half*, perhaps *more*, to himself; and yet expected to have been taken care of by the Apostles, as one that had given All to the Publick, and had left nothing of his own. This is so plainly and clearly the intent of the History, that it might almost seem needless so much as to repeat it; and it can hardly be set forth in more full expressions, than it is declared in the very Words of the Text itself. Yet, I know not whence it comes to pass, many of the most learned Commentators have made a shift to mistake it; and with much Difficulty have found means to make That appear hard and intricate, which in reality was most easy and obvious. For whereas the Apostle charges *Ananias* with the *Deliberateness* of the *Fraud*; and aggravates it with the Consideration of his having been under *no Necessity* to make any *Profession* of parting with his Estate *at all*, if he was not willing to do it *in reality*; For *whilst it remained*, says he, *was it not thine own?* And *after it was sold*, *was it not in thine own Power?*

Why

116 *Of the Sin of deliberate Fraud.*

Why hast thou then conceived this thing in thine Heart?

Whereas This, I say, is evidently the Apostle's meaning; Many, on the contrary, have contended, that *after it was sold*, it was by no means any longer in his own Power; because selling it with an *Intention* to give it to the Apostles, they imagine was equivalent to an *Actual solemn Vow*; and *That*, could not be broken without plain *Sacrilege*: And therefore those Words, *after it was sold*, was it not in thine own Power? they interpret to signify, *Was it not in thy Power to have brought us the full price of it, and so to have compleatly accomplished thy Vow?* But, besides That this is a very forced and unnatural Interpretation of these particular Words; 'tis moreover very harsh in the general, to suppose a *solemn Vow*, whereof there is not the least mention made, either in the Text or in the whole History; and to fix the main Crime upon such a Circumstance, for which there does not in the Text appear to be so much as any Foundation at all. On the other side, St Peter's Words, in the obvious and literal Sense, seem to be very easy and natural; that *Ananias* might, if he had pleased, have kept to himself, either his *Estate* or his *Money*; For, who compelled him to sell it at all? And, after it was sold, if he had a Mind to have kept the Price of it to himself, *Who* compelled him to deposite it in the Apostle's hands? But when he *professed* to bring the whole Money into the publick Stock of the Church, and so have a Right to be maintained out of that Stock, then at the same time to keep back part of it by a Fraudulent Lie, and with intent to deceive the Apostles and impose upon the whole Body of the Disciples, This was evidently a very crying Sin, and (without the needless Supposition of a *Vow*) even no less than *Sacrilege*,

AND

AND This, concerning the 1st particular, viz. *What the Crime in general was, wherewith Ananias is here charged by the Apostle.*

II. Secondly; I PROPOSED in the 2^d place, to consider the several *Circumstantial Aggravations* of the Crime, in *His Case in particular*. And here we may observe, first, that *deliberate or contrived Fraud*, is in itself a Crime of the deepest Malignity, and of the most pernicious consequences: A Sin which tends to destroy all human Society, all Trust and Confidence among Men, all Justice and Equity which is the Support of the World, and without which no Society of Mankind can subsist. And the breaking through this Obligation by deliberate Fraud, is, of all other Sins, one of the most open Defiances of Conscience, and the most wilful Opposition to right Reason, that can be imagined: A Sin, for which a Man can find no Excuse, nor Extenuation in his own Mind; into the Commission of which, he can be led by no Error, by no wrong judgment, by no mistaken Opinion whatsoever; but he must of Necessity, at least for That Time, have abandoned all true Sense of Religion; and depend entirely upon the Fact's not being discovered, for the concealment of his Shame. Then, for a *Christian*: a man that Professes a pure, and more Holy Religion; a Religion that commands not only common Justice and Equity, but singular Love and Good-will towards our Neighbour; and requires not only Abstinence from the Unjust Things of the World, but also a Contempt and Indifference even for its innocent Enjoyments; for a man who professes *such a Religion*, to be guilty of a contrived and deliberate Fraud, which the Conscience even of a good *Heathen* would abhor; this is a *greater* Aggravation of the Crime. Further yet; to defraud
that

that Stock, which was intended principally for the Support and Maintenance of the *Poor*, in a Time of great Trouble and Persecution; This was an additional Increase of his Guilt. And 'tis no inconsiderable Circumstance, that This was done at a Time when the whole Church were of *one heart and of one Mind*, with the utmost Simplicity and Sincerity of Manners; when there were no ill Examples to corrupt or seduce the Man, but every one contributed with the *utmost Chearfulness* to the Support of their Brethren; and with all readiness put all that they had, into the hands of the Apostles. Beyond All This; 'Tis observable that *Ananias*, excepting the Covetous Disposition of his *own* Mind, had *no Necessity, no Occasion, no Temptation* put upon him *from without*, to drive him into the projecting of such a Deceit. For this selling of their Estates, and laying them at the Apostle's Feet, was not a matter of *Compulsion*, but of *Free Choice*; not a Duty required of them of Necessity and by Constraint, but an Instance of voluntary Liberality and of the most publick-spirited Charity. *Ananias* therefore could not alledge, that there was any Hardship, any Constraint put upon him in selling his Estate, which might tempt him to do it in a deceitful manner; but the Whole being *voluntary*, his Transaction was from the beginning, originally, and in its whole Progress, without any Colour of excuse, a deliberately-projected, wilful, and continued Fraud. And this I conceive to be the meaning of *St Peter's Manner* of aggravating his Crime, by that severe reproof and Appeal to his *own* Conscience in the Words of the Text; *Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own Power? Why bast thou then conceived this thing in thine Heart?* Lastly, There is still a farther Aggravation

tion of his Crime, above all that has been yet said ; and That is, the *presumptuousness* of attempting to deceive those persons, whom he believed and knew to be inspired with the *Spirit of God*: the Holy Ghost having so lately descended upon them in that extraordinary and miraculous manner at Pentecost. To lie to the Apostles in This case, was lying to the Holy Ghost, by whom the Apostles were inspired ; and lying to the Holy Ghost, was in effect Lying to God himself, who had given unto them his Holy Spirit. *Why bath Satan filled thine Heart to lie to the Holy Ghost ?—Thou hast not lied unto Men, but unto God ?* The Word which we render, *lie to the Holy Ghost*, signifies properly, not only affirming an Untruth, or denying a Promise, but, somewhat more fully and emphatically, *deceiving, cheating, or imposing upon* a Person. By imposing upon the Apostles, *Ananias* attempted, as much as in him lay, to deceive the Holy Ghost ; and deceiving the Holy Ghost, is the very same thing, as undertaking to impose upon God himself, who dwelt in the Apostles by his Holy Spirit. The Scripture frequently speaks in this manner: 1 Cor. vi. 19 ; *Your Body, saith St Paul, is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God ; i. e. which God has given you :* and 2 Cor. vi. 16 ; *Ye are the Temple of the Living God.* In the one place he calls them Temples of the *Holy Ghost* ; in the other he calls them Temples of the *Living God*. The Reason of these two different manners of speaking is expressed in one, Eph. ii. 21 ; *ye are an Holy Temple in the Lord, —an habitation of God, thro' the Spirit ;* and 1 Cor. iii. 16 ; *Ye are the Temple of God ;—for the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.* *Ananias's* lying therefore to the Holy Ghost which dwelt in the Apostles, was the very same thing, as lying to God himself, who dwelt in the

Apostles

Apostles by his Holy Spirit. And this was the highest *Presumption*, and the most daring Insolence in the World.

WHY hath Satan filled *thine Heart*? The meaning of the Word, according to the import of the *Hebrew* Idiom, is, Why hath Satan made thee so *presumptuous*? For so we find the same Phrase to signify, *Estb. vii. 5*; *Where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so?* In the Margin 'tis literally, according to the Original, where is he *whose Heart has filled him* to do this Thing? And *Eccles. viii. 11*; *Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do evil*; In the Original it is, *their Heart has filled them*, they are *presumptuous*, to do evil.

AND this likewise is the meaning of the following Words of St Peter to *Sapphira*, ver. 9; *How is it that ye have agreed together to Tempt the Spirit of the Lord?* The Word, *Tempt*, does not signify, as it sounds in the *English*, to *Try*, or to *make Tryal*, whether God *could* discover them or no; but according to the *Hebrew* Language, and as 'tis very frequently used in the Old Testament, it signifies *presumptuously and with a high hand to provoke God*; as if Men meant to *Try* whether they were stronger than he, when they disobey him knowingly and with perfect choice. Thus *Num. xiv. 22*; *Because all those men which have seen my Glory, and my Miracles which I did in Egypt and in the Wilderness, and have Tempted me now, i. e. have rebelled against me, these Ten times, and have not hearkened to my Voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their Fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it.* Here, That

which is called *Tempting* of God, in the beginning of the Sentence; is at the latter End explained by the Word, *provoked*. It may justly be wondered, how a man that had seen the Apostles Miracles and the Power of the Holy Ghost, and had been just converted thereby to the Belief of the Gospel, could be so absurd as to hope to impose upon them by so gross a Fraud. But so it always is, that Sinners have Eyes and see not, and Understandings and yet will not understand: And, as *Balaam* was so foolish, that when he found God would by no means permit *Israel* to be cursed, yet he would still persist, and go to Another Hill, and try if he could prevail to curse them from thence; so Wicked men will never be convinced that *God is not to be mocked*, 'till they perish finally in their incorrigible Presumption. The great Aggravation therefore of *Ananias's* Sin, was This presumptuous setting himself against the clearest Manifestation of God's Power and Glory in the Apostles. For what our Saviour declared in general to his Disciples, that *he that despises you, despises me, and he that despises me, despises him that sent me*; was, in a more eminent and particular manner, true of This Person; who, by lying to the *Apostles* at a Time when he saw them evidently inspired, did in reality presume to lie to the *Holy Ghost* which inspired them; and, by lying to the Holy Ghost, did consequently lie to *God* himself, whole Spirit he defied. And as his Crime was thus peculiarly great, so also accordingly was his Punishment. In which nevertheless, since others afterwards were not so punished, 'tis reasonable to suppose, that the Ground of that particular Severity was This; that, as at the first

setting up the *Jewish* institution, *Uzzab*, for but touching the Ark, was struck dead; and *Achan*, for preserving some of the Spoils of *Jericho*, was stoned to Death; and the man who did but gather sticks upon the Sabbath-day, was by God's express Command to be put to Death; So, at the beginning of the Gospel, the first Transgression was, for *Terror* and *Example's* sake, punished with a singular and peculiar Temporal Severity.

III. IT remains in *the Third* and last place, that I proceed to draw some useful and practical Observations, from the several Expressions contained in the Text. And

1st, FROM hence we may learn how great a Crime, *Deliberate Fraud* is, which God in this Case of *Ananias*, was pleased to punish with so very exemplary and remarkable a Punishment.

2^{dly}, WE may observe in the Text, that the Scripture ascribes *all* great Sins to the Influence of the *Devil*; Why has *Satan* filled thine Heart? The *Devil*, is the Head of Apostacy and Rebellion against God: And therefore, as all *Good* is ascribed to *God*, because 'tis an imitation of his Nature, is performed by his Assistance, and is agreeable to his Will: so all *Evil* is ascribed to the *Devil*; because 'tis a following of his Example, 'tis performed at his instigation, and is agreeable to his Desires. 1 *Job*. iii. 8; *He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning*; — *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin*; — *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil*. Hence 'tis said, that *Satan* provoked David to number Israel; 1 *Chron*. xxi. 1. *that Satan taketh away the Word sown in*

mens Hearts, Mar. iv. 15. that our *Adversary the Devil*, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. v. 8. and that we wrestle against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darknes of this World, against spiritual wickedness in high places, Ephes. vi. 12. Nay even all Natural Evils also, for the same reason are in Scripture sometimes ascribed to the Devil; because he is the great Promoter, the Head, the Designer and the Lover of Evil. Thus, concerning the Woman that was bowed together, St Luke, xiii. 11; 'tis said that Satan had bound her these eighteen years; Luke, xiii. 16. Likewise, that Satan bindred St Paul from coming unto the Thessalonians, 1 Th. ii. 18. Rom. i. 13, 15, 22. that an affliction sent him in the flesh, was the Messenger of Satan to buffet him; 2 Cor. xii. 7. and that the Devil should cast some of the Saints into Prison, Rev. ii. 10.

3dly; 'Tis observable in the Text, that the Scripture's ascribing all great Sins to the Influence of the Devil, is not by way of *Excuse*, but always on the contrary an *Aggravation*. *Ananias*, Why hath Satan filled thine Heart? 'Twas not any Extenuation, but the Greatness of his Fault, that he suffered Satan to fill his Heart. Indeed, where either the Devil or Man find means to deceive a Person, and lead him really into Error; there the Error, or the being deceived, must and ought to be looked upon as some Alleviation of the Fault: But where the Crime is plain, and there is no room for Error of the judgment, as in the Case of deliberate Fraud; there the being tempted by the Devil, is no more an Excuse, than the being tempt-

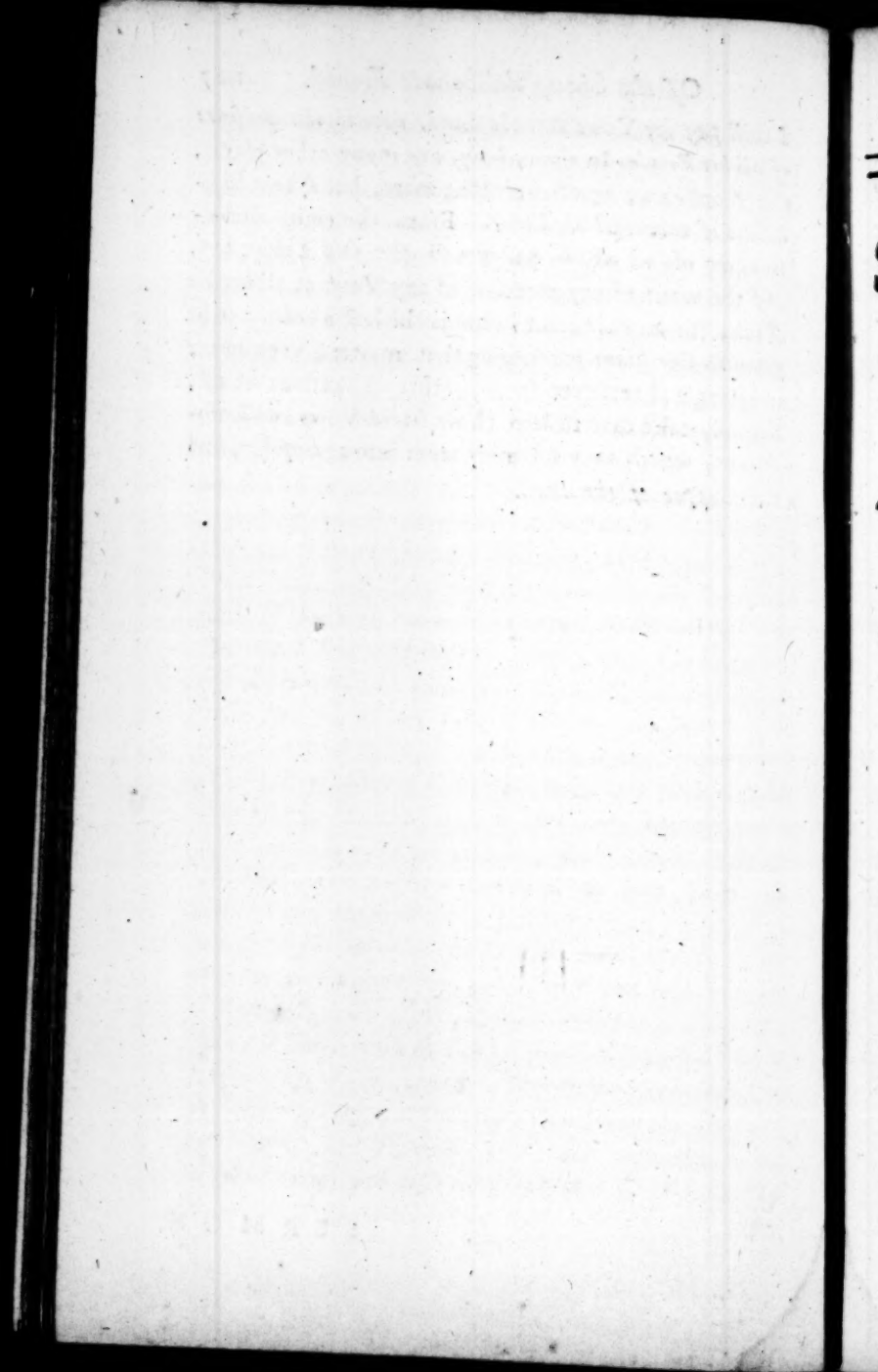
ed by the *Profit* or the *Gain* of the Sin; Because, in such Case, the Temptation of the Devil is in reality nothing more, but his laying before a Man the Gainfulness of the Sin: And the Person's being prevailed upon by That Temptation, is so far from being an Excuse, that 'tis indeed the very Essence and formal Nature of the Crime, his *consenting to yield* to that Temptation, which could have had no Power over him but by his own Consent. This is the *very* thing, which 'tis the proper Business of a Christian to overcome. And as 'tis his Duty always to *grow in grace*, and to take heed not to *resist* and *grieve the Holy Spirit*; so likewise on the contrary 'tis his Duty, to *resist the Devil*; And 'tis in his *Power* to do so, for he shall *flee from him*; Eph. iv. 27. nor can any man be made to sin, but *when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed*, James iv. 7. i. 14. For so the Scripture always speaks; declaring even concerning *Judas*, that 'twas through his own *Covetousness* that the Devil entred into him, and put it into his Heart to *betray* his Master; and concerning the *Corinthians*, that *Satan* could not tempt them, but through *their own incontinency*; 1 Cor. vii. 5. Even in like manner as *St Peter* in the Text reproves *Ananias*, *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart?*

4thly, and lastly; FROM what has been said in explication of *These Words*; *whilst it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own Power?* it appears that *Ananias* was not, as has been generally supposed, under any *Vow*; Neither is there in This, or in any Other Passage in the whole New Testament, any mention
of

of any Christians making any *Vows at all*. In the Old Testament, among other legal Rites and Customs, there is indeed frequent mention of *Vows*; and in the History of the *Acts* of the Apostles, *Acts* xviii, 18. 21. 23. there is an Account of certain *Jews* that lay under *Vows*; and of Converts that lay under *Vows* made before their conversion. For when they are made, the Matter of them not being unlawful, they are of Necessity to be kept; *For God hath no pleasure in Fools: Pay that which thou hast vowed*; Eccles. v. 4, 5. But even under the Law itself in the *Jewish* State, there was no Necessity of making them, *For if thou shalt forbear to Vow, it shall be no Sin in thee*; Deut. xxiii. 22. And under the Gospel, there is not only no precept, but even not so much as any one Example of any such Thing in the whole New Testament. Baptism indeed and the Lord's Supper, are solemn *Vows* of Obedience towards God; But the Matter of them is such, as was, before, our indispensable Duty; And such solemn renewing our Holy Resolutions of doing what is of absolute Necessity to be done, is undoubtedly of great and perpetual Use. But in other Cases, *Vows* are at best nothing but needless Snares upon Men; and generally, (as in the Church of *Rome* their *Vows* of *Single Life*, of *perpetual Poverty*, and the like) generally, I say, they are of superstitious and unwarrantable Practice. The Young man in the Gospel, who not content with being told that by keeping the Commandments he should live, would needs recommend himself by putting our Saviour upon requiring more of him; departed wholly from Christ through his own needless importunity; and may well be a warning against aiming at Works of Supererogation. What is fit to be done, may

be done without laying upon ourselves unnecessary Obligations; and such Obligations can be of no Benefit, but needlessly to involve men in Snares and Scruples. Even in the Old Testament itself, excepting, as I said, some particulars in matters of *Legal* performance; 'tis observable that the *Vows* we most frequently read of, were not such as the Word now generally signifies, but only *solemn Resolutions* of universal Obedience. *Jacob's Vow*, Gen. xxviii. 20; *If God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, — then shall the Lord be my God*; was nothing more but a devout Prayer, that God would be pleased to preserve *him*, that *he* might glorify God by professing the true Religion in the midst of Idolatrous Nations. The same is the meaning of the *people's Vow*, Num. xxi. 2; *Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then will I utterly destroy their Cities, i. e. have no friendship with the Idolaters*. And that of *Abshalom*, 2 Sam. xv. 8; *If the Lord shall bring me again indeed — then I will serve the Lord*. And to the same purpose of holy Resolutions of Obedience only, are those frequent Expressions, Is. xix. 21: *In that Day the Egyptians shall know the Lord; — yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it: And, the men feared the Lord, — and made Vows*; Jonah i. 16; ii. 9. And Ps. l. 14, *Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the most High*: lvi. 12; *Thy Vows are upon me, O God; I will render Praises unto the*: lxi. 5, 8; *Thou, O God, hast heard my Vows; thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy Name*; So will I sing praise unto thy Name for ever, that I may daily perform my Vows: And Ps. cxvi. 13; *I will receive the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord*; I will

I will pay my Vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his People. In these, I say, and many other places, the Word *Vow*, signifies nothing more, but *solemn Resolutions of universal Obedience*. From the right understanding of all which passages in the *Old Testament*, and the want of any mention of any Vows at all in the *New*; 'tis very apparent what is the best direction to be given to *Christians* concerning that matter; even never to intangle themselves in any other obligations at all, but only take care to *keep* those sacred Vows and Resolutions, which they solemnly enter into at *Baptism*, and the *Supper of the Lord*.



SERMON IX.

Of the Heinousness of the Sin
of wilful Murder.

EXOD. xxi. 14.

But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

AS every Thing that God has created, is good; and nothing becomes *Evil*, but by some Corruption or Abuse: So every natural *Action* is in itself *innocent*, and becomes *immoral* merely from the *Circumstances* that attend it, or from the *intention* that produces it. *Taking away the Life of a Man*, is an *Act*, absolutely, and in the nature of the thing itself, neither good nor evil. In *some* cases and circumstances 'tis *just*, 'tis *righteous*, 'tis *praise-worthy*, according to the Laws both of God and Nature. In *other* cases, 'tis one of the greatest of All *Crimes*, and least likely to find Pardon either with *God* or *Men*. The explication of this *One Instance* in its
full

full extent, may be useful not only with regard to the *Particular* under consideration; but in *general* also it may proportionably be instructive, as setting forth the nature of *Morality* and *Immorality* in most *other* Instances whatsoever. The *Law* itself is thus express'd, *ver. 12*; *He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall surely be put to death.* Yet to show wherein the *Crime*, wherein the *Immorality* consists, there follows in the very next words a *Distinct* *Explication*, *ver. 13*; *If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his Neighbour, to slay him with Guile; thou shalt take him from mine Altar, that he may die.* The *Essence* of All Sin, lies in the *presuming* to transgress. Men know in their own conscience, that such or such an action *ought not* to be done; and yet they *presumptuously* take upon them to do it. This is what justly provokes the *Anger* of God; and according to the degree of the *presumption*, is the degree of the *Offence*. This is universally the case, in *All kinds* of *Sin*; and the reason of the *General* Doctrine will most clearly appear, by considering it in the *Case* of so remarkable a *Particular*, as is the Instance of *taking away the Life of Man*. Now a man's life may be taken away,

1st, *By Chance*; without any evil intention at all, in Him that does it. And where This is *truly* and *perfectly* the Case, there is *No Crime* or *Offence* committed. For the nature of every action, with regard to Good or Evil, is determined by the *Intention*; and where there is *no Intention*, there can
be

be no Morality nor Immorality in the Action. The Meaning of which is, not that the want of evil intention will excuse an action intrinsically Evil in its own nature; (For in things *intrinsically* and *unalterably wicked* in their own nature, no man's conscience can be *innocently* deceived;) But the Meaning is, that where there is no intention of doing the Action *at all*, (as in the present Case,) there the Effect is not indeed (properly speaking) the Action of the Moral and Intelligent Agent. The case is put, *Deut. xix. v; As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the Ax to cut down the Tree, and the Head slippeth from the Helve, and lighteth upon his Neighbour that he die.* Nevertheless, even in *This* case, where there is *no intention at all* of the *Event that comes to pass*; there may yet be, in another respect, *some degree of Faultiness* for want of *Care*. For one man ought not to suffer, through Another's *Heedlessness* or *Negligence*. And therefore all *reasonable precaution* to prevent even *accidental Evils*, is a Duty of real moral Obligation. Upon which Account God was pleased to appoint under *the Law*, that whosoever had the Misfortune to slay a man by Chance, should be obliged to the Trouble of fleeing unto a *City of Refuge*. The observation naturally arising from which Commandment, is, that 'tis a *general Duty* in all cases, not only to forbear every evil Act, which is *of malicious intention*; but to be careful moreover to avoid, as far as our short Foresight can extend, whatever may *accidentally* be the Occasion even of an *undesigned* Evil. Not that any man is at any time to forbear doing a *plain Duty*, because other men may from thence take an *Occasion* of

of doing *evil*: (For then the Gospel itself ought never to have been preach'd, because wicked men make it an occasion of bringing in a *Sword* instead of *Peace* upon Earth :) But in all cases where *Truth* and *Right* are not concerned, it is the Duty of a Christian in all his Actions to have regard to the probabilities even of *accidental* ill Consequences.

2dly; THE Life of a man may be taken away, in necessary and unavoidable *Self-defence*. In which case, not he that *takes away*, but he that *loses* his life, is guilty of the Transgression. For in all moral estimation of things, 'tis an universal Rule; that, not always He who perhaps *does* the action, but He always who is the real and *criminal cause* of it, is answerable for the Evil. *Contentions*, *Animosities*, and *Divisions* among Christians, are very great and pernicious immoralities: Yet not always He who *divides*, (as in the case of Protestants separating from the Church of Rome;) but He who *causes* the division, and makes it *necessary*, and by *whose Fault* it is that the *Offence cometh*, He only is truly answerable for the Crime. And the same holds true, even where *Life itself* is concerned. *Exod. xxii. 2*; *If a Thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no Blood be shed for him*. In like manner, where men fall by the Hand of *Justice*, for capital Crimes; not the *Magistrate*, nor the *Executioner*, but the *Criminal himself* is guilty of his own Blood. And, in all just and necessary *Wars*; not they who *slay* the Enemy, but they who by *Tyranny* and *Oppression*, by unsatiable *Avarice*, by *Ambition* and *Pride*, are stirred up to ravage and destroy the World; upon These comes the Blood of
 Thousands

Thousands and of Ten thousands, and of all that are slain upon the Earth.

FROM these and the like Instances it clearly appears, why the word, *presumptuously*, is added in the Text. 'Tis in *This*, as in all *other* Cases, not the bare material *Action*, but the *Circumstances of the Intention*, on which depends the Morality or Immorality of what is done. Not always He, who takes away the Life of a man, is a Murderer; But if a man come *Presumptuously* upon his Neighbour to slay him with guile, Him (says God in the Text) shalt thou take from mine Altar, that he may die.

It may well be thought, that, in a Christian Congregation, there can be no great need of enlarging upon a Crime, which at first sight startles every man's natural conscience. But as, in all *other* Instances of Wickedness, there are very many degrees, between being guilty of the highest or most capital Crime, and preserving the Habit of that contrary Virtue, to which the Prohibition was intended to be a Guard or Fence; so in the *present* Particular, there are many Degrees, between being guilty of the presumptuous Murder condemned in the Text, and maintaining on the contrary That Habit of Charity, of mutual Love and Good Will, of universal Benevolence and Care for each other's Benefit, which the Command, *Thou shalt not kill*, was, in its full extent, intended to secure. Thus our Saviour himself explains the matter; Matt. v. 21; *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: (That is, The Jewish Ca-*

fuists confined the Command of God to its most limited and restrained sense:) *But I say unto you, Whosoever is angry with his Brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council; But whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.* His Meaning is; that, proportionable to the degree of the Offence, shall be the nature and kind of the Punishment.

Now of all crimes that a man is capable of committing, that which is condemned in the *primary* and *literal* sense of the Text, is the most enormous; because 'tis, in the nature of the thing, irreparable; and which no after-act can make any Amends for. For, what recompence can be given a man in exchange for his Life? Or what satisfaction can He make for destroying the *Image of God*, who, far from restoring life, is not able to *make one Hair white or black*, or to *add One Cubit unto his Stature*? By the Law of *Nature* therefore, this Crime was always pursued with the most extreme vengeance: Which made the *Barbarians* to judge, *Acts* xxviii. 4, when they saw *St Paul* upon the point, as they thought, of dying a sudden and unnatural Death: *No doubt this man is a Murderer, whom, though he has escaped the Sea, yet Vengeance suffereth not to live.* By the Laws of all *civilized Nations* in all parts of the World, it has always been punished with Death. And by the Law of *God himself*, it is of All Offences declared to be the most unpardonable. (*Gen.* ix. 5; and *Num.* xxxv. 31;) *At the hand of every man's Brother, will I require the life of Man: Who-so sheddeth man's Blood, by man shall his Blood be shed.*

Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a Murderer: — he shall surely be put to Death. — So ye shall not pollute the Land; wherein ye are: For blood defileth the Land; and the Land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the Blood of him that shed it. For which reason 'tis recorded in the History of Manassah with particular emphasis, 2 Kings xxiv. 4; xxi. 16; that He filled Jerusalem with Blood from one end to the other, which the Lord would not pardon. And in the words of the Text, peculiar directions are given, that whosoever is guilty of innocent blood, should upon no account be suffered to escape: Thou shalt take him from mine Altar, that he may die.

It has been a very ancient imagination in persons guilty of the most crying Immoralities, that the Regard men are apt to have for the relative Sacredness of Places dedicated to the most solemn part of God's Worship, should be a sort of Refuge to them, and Protection from Justice. Thus we read, 1 Kings ii. 28, that Joab (who had fallen upon two men more righteous and better than himself, and had slain them with the Sword, ver. 32;) fled unto the Tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the Horns of the Altar. But, even under the Jewish dispensation, (where God himself had appointed the very minutest Forms and Ceremonies of their Religion, and had laid great Strefs even upon the nicest Particularities in the manner of Consecrating either Persons or Things or Places, as being Types and Representations of things spiritual and heavenly: Even under the Jewish dispensation itself, I say,) God was pleased, where-ever real Virtue and Morality were concerned, expressly to declare, as in the Text, that

no point of external and ceremonious institution, should in any wise interfere with matters of Eternal Justice, Righteousness, and Truth; and that no pretence of outward appointment in matters of Religion, no Sacredness of Place or Thing, no Worship or Sacrifice at His Altar, should upon any account be a *Cover* or *Protection* to any Vice or Immorality whatsoever. How much more absurd therefore is it under the *Christian* dispensation, (which, in its whole nature and design, is the accomplishment of all types and figures in the Practice of real and intrinsic Virtue and Holiness; How much more absurd is it *Here*,) to set up, as the Church of *Rome* has done in innumerable Instances, Superstitious Observances preferably to moral Virtue, and, particularly, to value themselves upon the *Immunities* (as they call them) granted to religious Places; by which, under pretence of being dedicated in a more sacred manner to the Service of God, they are very often made in a great degree a Protection to Criminals of the Highest kind, not excepting even *Murderers* themselves! But to proceed.

WHAT Scripture and Nature and Reason teach, concerning the Crime of attempting *another man's* life; is applicable in proportion to the Folly of a man's deliberately, and upon Discontent with Providence, bereaving himself of his *own* life. For as no man knows all the Ends and Designs, for which the Divine Providence appointed him his Station, whatsoever it be, in this present World; so no man has a Right to remove himself therefrom; to anticipate the Time of God's calling him to Judgement, or to deprive the Publick of a Member. There is no need to add any thing more upon This Head, than the words of a wise Philosopher among the Heathens. *All*

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plous men, says he, ought to have patience to remain in the Body, so long as God, whose Temple and Palace this whole World is, shall please to continue them there; and not force themselves out of the World, before he calls for them; lest they be found Deserters of the Station appointed them of God. Cic. Somn. Scipion.

THESE are Crimes of a very High Nature; I wish I could also add, altogether unexampled. But 'tis further to be observed, as I have already intimated; that, in the case before us, as in almost all other Instances of Wickedness; between being guilty of the presumptuous Sin condemned in the Text, and maintaining on the contrary That Habit of Charity, of mutual Love and Good Will, of universal Benevolence and Care for each other's Benefit, which the Commandment, to which my Text has reference, was, in its full extent, intended to secure: between These two things, I say, there are very many Degrees, in which the Command given in the Law, as explained by our Saviour in the Gospel, (in his Sermon upon the Mount,) may in different manners be transgressed. As

1st; IN many civilized Nations, and Nations which at the same time profess Christianity too; from a wrong notion of Honour, not regulated by the Limits of true Virtue, there has prevailed a Custom, unknown in ancient times to virtuous nations, even who had not received the Light of the Gospel; a Custom for men of unsuspected Courage and Greatness of mind, men useful to their Country in Posts of the greatest Consequence, and capable of the noblest Actions, needlessly to expose their Lives, on a sudden Transport of Passion, in vindication frequently of a very small Affront, or sometimes perhaps even of a Mistake only. A matter wherein Human Laws, and

the Execution of Justice among Men, have oftentimes been very apt to incline to the favourable side; where the Laws of God, and the Reason of the *thing itself*, seem not to have left Any room for such Allowances. For if (as I before observed) God was pleased to appoint under *the Law*, that whosoever had the misfortune to slay a man by Chance, without Any sort of ill intention at all, should be obliged to the Trouble of fleeing to a *City of Refuge*; that every degree even of *Negligence, Heedlessness*, or want of *Care*, whereby our Neighbour might possibly receive Damage, might (as far as possible) be prevented: How much *more* reasonable is it, that Transports of *Passion* and even of the most sudden Provocation, should not be allowed in excuse of an irreparable Damage! a Damage, not only irreparable in *This* World, but of unspeakable ill consequence with regard also to that which is *to come*; For persons in these Circumstances generally leave the World, without any real *Forgiveness* of each other, and without any possibility of effectual *Repentance and Amendment* towards God.

2dly; THE Laws of God, relating to the Life of our Neighbour; taking them according to their real Design, and in their true Extent; are transgressed by all real *Mischiefs* and *Injuries* whatsoever, done by One man to *Another*, or brought by any man, through the means of any unlawful Action, consequentially upon *Himself*. They are transgressed by All *Debaucheries*, whereby men destroy *Themselves*; or which they draw *Others* into, to the Ruin of the *Health* of their *Bodies*, and the *Reason* of their *Minds*. They are transgressed by all wilful
Frauds,

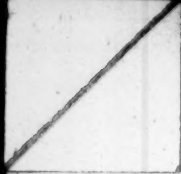
Frauds, and deliberate *Adulations*, of things made use of either in *Food* or *Medicines*; and in a word, by every thing, (*out of the way* of a man's plain Duty,) in consequence whereof any man receives detriment in his Person. Nor is it, in any of these cases, a sufficient Excuse, in point of morality, to alledge, that the Evil which follows, was not *intended*. For, though no man is answerable for any accidental ill Consequences, which he may possibly be the occasion of in the Performance of his *Duty*; yet whenever any man does any *unlawful Action*, he is undoubtedly *answerable*, (in different *degrees* indeed, according to different Circumstances; but *answerable* certainly he is,) not only for the Evil he *directly intended*, but also for the *accidental* ill Consequences of That Action, which it was his direct Duty *not* to have performed.

3dly and *Lastly*; THE Precept of the *old Law* referred to in my Text, as explained in the *Gospel-sense* by our Saviour in his Sermon upon the Mount; is transgressed by all *Wrath*, *Malice*, *Strife*, *Contentiousness*, and *Hatred* towards our Brethren. 1 *Job*. iii, 15; *Whoever hateth his Brother, is a Murderer; and ye know that no Murderer hath eternal Life abiding in him.* The Ground of the Apostle's expressing himself after this manner, is; not only because the Beginnings of wrath and animosities, in event often extend to great and unforeseen Effects; as *Cain's* causeless Anger against his Brother, which the Apostle alludes to in the foregoing verses, ended at length in taking away his Life; But also because, in the very nature of the thing, all Hatred and Malice, all Contentiousness and Animosity, is in itself *unchristian*, and is the Spirit of the *Devil*, who was a *Murderer from the Beginning*. For
which

which reason our Saviour, in the *place before referred to*, explaining the Ancient Law upon this head, enlarges it Thus. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: — But I say unto you, Whosoever is Angry with his Brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment; And whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council; But whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.* The words are an allusion to three different degrees of Punishment, in three several Courts of Judicature among the *Jews*. And the Sense of them is, that every degree of *Hatred, Malice, and Uncharitableness* towards our Brethren, shall finally receive from God a proportionable Punishment, a Punishment proportionable to each degree of the Offence; whereas the *Old Law* (according to the *Jews* interpretation of it,) extended not to these things at all, but forbade only *Murder* and outward Injuries. *Whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire:* The Meaning is; not that, in the strict and literal sense, every such rash and passionate expression shall be punished with eternal damnation: (For who then should be saved?) But that at the exact Account in the judgment of the Great Day, every *Word* and *Work*, nay, every secret Thought and Intent of the Heart, shall have its just Estimation and Weight, in determining the *degrees* of Happiness or Punishment, which shall be assigned to every man in his final and eternal State.

DID men frequently and seriously consider these things as they ought; there would not be found among Christians such Strifes and Contentions, such Hatred and Animosities, such Violence and Uncharitableness, as there is; altogether inconsistent with that Meekness
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and *Love*, which the Apostle declares to be *the Fulfilling of the Law* ; and directly contrary to That Spirit of universal Benevolence, Good Will, and mutual Forbearance, which the Scripture every where represents as of much greater Value in the Sight of God, than all the Sacrifices offered up to him upon his Altar in the *Jewish State*, and than all the external Worship paid to him even in the *Christian Church* itself.



W. J. L. M. A. 1871

S E R M O N X.

Of the several Sorts of Hypocrisy.

J O B xiii. 16.

He also shall be my Salvation, for an Hypocrite shall not come before him.

TH E occasion of these Words, was Job's Friends urging against him, that because God had grievously afflicted him, therefore he must needs have been a very wicked man. To this, Job constantly replies, by maintaining his own Innocency; and insisting that God the supreme Governour of all things, afflicted him for *other* Reasons according to his own good pleasure, and not for any wickedness or unrighteousness found in Job, ch. xxvii. 5; *'Till I die, I will not remove my Integrity from me: My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my Heart shall not reproach me so long as I live: For what is the Hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul?* The meaning of which Defence of himself, was not that he claimed to be entirely without Sin; For

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For, on the contrary, when he speaks in *This* Sense, of being Single towards God, he expresses himself in a quite different manner; *If I justify myself*, saith he, *my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse*; ch. ix. 20. But with regard to great Crimes, such Wickedness as his Friends collected, from his state of Adversity, that he must needs have been guilty of; from *these* he constantly clears himself with the greatest Steadiness; and proves that they argued very wrongfully for God, when they supposed that God could no otherwise be justified in afflicting *Job*, than by *Job's* having been a very wicked man. ver. 7. of this xiiith chapter; *Will you speak wickedly*, saith he, *for God; and talk deceitfully for Him? Will ye accept his Person? Will ye contend for God? Though he slay me, (ver. 15,) yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain my own ways before him*: That is, Though he afflict me to Death, yet will I trust that he does not expect from me a *false confession*, or that I should endeavour to *justify his Proceedings* by any wrong *Supposition*. And then he adds in the words of the Text; *He also shall be my Salvation, for an Hypocrite shall not come before him*: That is, I know that, after all this, he will at length deliver me; and will in the End distinguish his faithful Servant, from the Destruction of a *Hypocrite*.

THE word *Hypocrite*, is here plainly used in opposition to such a sincere person as can *maintain his own ways before God*; so *Job* expresses it: Or, in St *John's* phrase, to such a good man, who, because *his own Heart condemneth him not*, has therefore *Confidence towards God*. In which matter, because there is oftentimes very great Deceit; and frequently very ill men think themselves *not to be Hypocrites*, because they are
not

not so in the grossest and most literal Sense of the word; I shall therefore in the following Discourse endeavour to set this matter in a clear Light, and point forth distinctly the several sorts of men, which are in Scripture charged with the Denomination of *Hypocrites*. The Use of which Discourse will be, that we may learn, not to judge our *Neighbours*, whose Hearts we cannot discern; any further than they open themselves by manifest Actions: But that every man may seriously examine his *own* Heart by the Rule of Scripture, and find whether there be not often in it more of what the Scripture styles *Hypocrisy*; than careless persons are apt to be aware of.

I. First then; THE *greatest* and *highest* degree of *Hypocrisy*, is when men, with a formed Design and deliberate Intention, endeavour, under a Pretence of Religion and an Appearance of serving God, to carry on worldly and corrupt Ends. Of *This* sort, were those whom our Saviour describes, *Mat. xxiii. 14; Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; For ye devour widows Houses, and for a pretence make long Prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. And ver. 27; Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead mens bones, and of all uncleanness; Even so Ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.* The Words next following to which, have in the manner of expression, a difficulty which deserves particular explication: *Ver. 29; Wo unto you,* says our Saviour, *because ye build the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnish the Sepulchres of the righteous; And say, If we had been in the days of our Fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets: Wherefore ye are witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed*

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the Prophets. The same words, as recorded by St Luke, are still more remarkable, *cb. xi. 47 ; Wo unto you ; for ye build the Sepulchres of the Prophets, and your Fathers killed them ; Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your Fathers ; for They indeed killed them, and Ye build their Sepulchres.* The Question here is, *how* our Saviour pronounces a *Wo* against these Pharisees, *for* building the Sepulchres of the Prophets ; and *how* he infers, that they *allowed* the deeds of their Fathers, by that *very* action whereby they professed to *disclaim* and *disallow* them. Now in order to explain This difficulty, 'tis needful only to observe, that in *some* languages, and in That of the *Jews* particularly, 'tis both usual and elegant to suppress *part* of the proposition, which yet by necessary inference is always plainly understood. Thus *Rom. vi. 17 ; God be thanked, saith St Paul, that ye were the Servants of Sin ; but ye have obeyed the doctrine that was delivered you.* His meaning plainly is ; *God be thanked, that, notwithstanding your strong Prejudices against the Gospel, by having been formerly habitual Sinners, yet at length ye were convinced and embraced the Truth.* In like manner *here*, the Pharisees well understood the force of our Saviour's reproof, and that his intention was *This*, to declare that *notwithstanding* their professing to disclaim the Deeds of their Fathers who killed the Prophets, yet in reality they were as truly in the *moral sense* the children of these men by *Likeness and Imitation of Manners*, as they acknowledged themselves to be descended from them by *natural Birth* ; and that, *notwithstanding* their pretending to show great Respect for the Memory of the Ancient Prophets, by building and adorning their Tombs ; yet in reality this Respect was only shown to those Prophets because they were *Dead*, and could no longer reprove
and

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and shame them for their Vices ; whereas the *Living Prophets* were persecuted by them, just as the *Ancient Ones* had been by their *Fore-fathers*. These men therefore were guilty of the *first* and *biggest* degree of *hypocrisy*, carrying on wicked designs deliberately under the Pretence of Religion.

OF the same kind were Those in the *xvth* of *St Matthew*, ver. 1 ; who after our Saviour had in their presence worked many Miracles upon *Earth*, perversely and impertinently (as if the *Place* were of more moment than the *Greatness* of the Work) urged him to *show* them likewise some Miracles in the *Heavens*. To whom he replies, ver. 3, with suitable Sharpness ; *O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the Face of the Sky, but can ye not discern the Signs of the Times ?*

UNDER the same denomination also, come Those mentioned in the *xxiid* chapter of the same Gospel, at the *17th* verse ; who asked our Saviour, *Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not ?* meaning to accuse him as a *Betrayer of the Liberty of the Jews*, if he should say it *was* lawful ; or on the contrary, as a *mover of Sedition against the Romans*, if he should say it *was not* lawful. To whom therefore he accordingly replies with a deserved Sharpness, ver. 18, *Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites ?*

Lastly ; UNDER the same rank and character, (of hypocrites of the *worst* sort, such as have no manner of Regard either to *God* or to *True Virtue* in all their Pretences to Religion ;) under *This* rank, I say, may justly be placed Those Pharisees, against whose Practices our Saviour warns his Disciples, *St Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16 ; When thou dost thine alms, do not sound a Trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the Synagogues and in the Streets, that they may have*
O 2 *Glory*

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Glory of Men. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the Hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of Men. And when ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast. This Corruption was, in our Saviour's time, grown in a manner so universal, among the most eminent Men of the Jews; that, as if it had been the known and proper characteristick of some of their principal Sects, he sometimes, without mentioning the particular, thought it sufficient to admonish and caution his Disciples in those general words, *St Matt. xvi. 6; Take heed and beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees; Of the Leaven, that is, (as the Evangelist explains it, ver. 12;) of the Doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees; and St Luke still more expressly, ch. xii. 1; The Leaven of the Pharisees, which is Hypocrisy.*

AFTER our Saviour's time, the Apostles describe to us the same kind of hypocrisy, in the characters of the worst men who were in following Ages to arise in the Church. The Times shall come, saith *St Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 2*, when men shall be lovers of their own selves,—more than lovers of God; Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof;—creeping into houses, and leading captive silly women, laden with Sins, led away with divers Lusts. His meaning is, to describe such persons, as under pretence of Sanctity and a Form of Godliness, or with great zeal for certain Rites and Ceremonies and Appearances of Religion, either cheat and defraud men in their dealings without Truth and Justice, or corrupt mens manners, and seduce men and women into the

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the Practice of *Immoralities*, as if *not inconsistent* with Religion. Our Saviour has given us a never-failing Rule, to discover this hypocrisy: *By their Fruits*, says he, *ye shall know them*; Matt. vii. 16. Not by their Zeal, not by their *Fierceness*, for This or the other particular *Opinion*, for This or the other particular *Form* of Godliness; but by their *Fruits*, says he, by the general and habitual Tenour and Course of their Lives, *by This ye shall know them*. For, as a good Tree can no otherwise be distinguished from a bad one, but by the Fruit it bears; so in matters of Religion, *whatever*, under *any pretence* whatsoever, has *any other* tendency, than to promote Truth and Justice, Plainness and Simplicity, Sobriety and Righteousness, Meekness and Equity, Charity and universal Good-will amongst Men; whatever (I say) has *any other* Tendency than This, is, by our Saviour's Rule, most certain *Hypocrisy*: 'Tis *Professing to know God*, but in *Works denying him*, Tit. i. 16: From hence we may easily judge, under what Head are to be placed the *gainful Doctrines of Purgatory*, of *Masses for the Dead*, of *private Confessions and Absolutions by the Power of the Priest*, of *Prohibitions of Meats by the Authority of the Church*, in order to grant *Indulgencies for the Church's Profit*; and the like. Concerning which kind of things, St Paul speaks prophetically, 1 Tim. iv. 2; *seducing Spirits*, saith he, *speaking lies in hypocrisy*; *having their conscience seared with a hot iron*; *Forbidding to marry*, and *commanding to abstain from meats*; and so on: And Tit. i. 11; *Teaching things which they ought not, for filthy Lucre's sake*. Which sort of Doctrines, because they are naturally accompanied with a *fastidious and contentious*

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sentious Spirit, without which they can never be supported; and because they are of such a Nature, as can never proceed from mere Errour of the Understanding, but always arise from some Perverseness of the Will, inconsistent with the sincerity and good conscience of a Christian; therefore they are by the Apostles styled Factions or Heresies; that is, corrupt Notions propagated by wicked men for worldly and factious Purposes, against the conviction of their own Consciences: Tit. iii. 10; A man that is an Heretick, reject; knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself: And 2 Pet. ii. 1; They shall bring in damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them: That is, departing from God, (who redeemed or bought them to himself with a price, even with the precious Blood of Christ,) they shall through Covetousness, saith he, (that is, through the Love of this world, through Ambition, or the Desire of Temporal Power and Profit,) with feigned words make merchandise of you, ver. 3.

THIS, is the *first* and *biggest* degree of *hypocrisy*; when men thus, with a formed Design and deliberate Intention, endeavour under a Pretence of Religion, and an Appearance of serving God, to carry on worldly and corrupt Ends. And because the word *hypocrisy* is Now generally used in This *worst* Sense; therefore, if men know themselves to be free from this greatest and most hateful degree of it, they are too apt immediately to flatter themselves, that they are consequently in no sense chargeable with being Hypocrites at all. But the Scripture frequently uses the same word in several *lower* senses, which deserve carefully to be taken notice

of; when it describes men, not indeed *profligate* as the fore-going, but yet, in their several degrees, justly charged with being guilty of *Hypocrisy*.

II. *Secondly*, THEREFORE; those who not absolutely mean to cast off all Religion, nor dare in their own hearts totally to despise it; but yet willingly content themselves with the *formal* part of it, and by zealously observing certain outward Rites and Ceremonies, think to atone for great Defects of Sobriety, Righteousness and Truth; *These* also the Scripture always includes, under the character and denomination of *Hypocrites*. *These*, the presence of the Ark of God, preserved not, in the days of *Saul*, from falling into the hands of the *Philistines*. *These*, the Temple of God, and the Sacredness of the place wherein he had chosen, above all the Nations upon Earth, to place his Name there; delivered not from the desolations brought upon *Jerusalem*, by the *Chaldeans* and the *Romans*. *These*, all the Promises made by Christ in the New Testament to his Church, rescued not, in the days of the Christian Emperors, from the over-flowing deluge of barbarous Nations, of *Goths* and *Vandalls*, from *abroad*; nor from the growing corruption of idolatrous Ceremonies, and Saint-worship, from *within*. *These*, each in their several Ages, were zealous for the *Name* of their Religion, but not for the *righteousness* thereof; and therefore God removed their Candlestick out of its place. This, is That species of Hypocrisy, for which *Samuel* reprov'd *Saul*, 1 Sam. xv. 22; *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of Rams*: And for which the Prophet *Hosea* thus reproves the

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the people of the *Jews* in *His* time, *cb. vi. 6*; *I desired Mercy, and not Sacrifice; and the Knowledge of God, more than Burnt-offerings.* This also was, in our Saviour's days, the case of the *better* sort of Pharisees, of Those who seem, *not to have been* wholly profligate and void of all Religion in their Hearts, but *superstitious* with regard to *small* things, to the Neglect of *Greater*. Such, as he styles *hypocrites*; for *teaching, as Doctrines, the Commandments of Men*; St *Matt. xv. 9*: For contributing *superstitiously*, to the adorning and beautifying of the Temple, that particular Portion of their Goods, which they ought to have employed in maintaining their poor and indigent Parents; *ver. 5*: For being zealous in the observation of the *traditionary* Ceremonies of their Fore-Fathers, in the frequent *washing of hands*, and *cleaning of Cups*, and other outward *Purifications*; to the neglect of true Virtue, and *inward* moral Righteousness; *Matt. xxiii. 25*: For being precise in *tirbing mint, anise and cummin*; and *omitting the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith*; *Faith*, that is, Faithfulness or Fidelity in all their Dealings with men, *ver. 23*: Lastly, for being *more solicitous*, in keeping the *positive* Law of their *Sabbath*, (which ought indeed not to be left undone; But he accuses them for being *more* solicitous in attending to This,) than in works of *mercy, goodness, and charity*, which are of eternal and unalterable Obligation; St *Luke xiii. 15*; *Tbou hypocrite*, says our Saviour to the Ruler of the Synagogue, *Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, to be loosed from this Bond, (from this Disease,) on the Sabbath-day?*

Or the same Species of hypocrisy, are *They* guilty in *All* Ages, who make the Advancement of Religion, and the increase of the Kingdom of Christ,

to consist chiefly in the *external, temporal, or worldly* Prosperity of those who are called by his Name; in Pomp and Splendour, in Riches and Dignities, in Authority, Power and Dominion. Not perhaps that they go upon the Principles of *Atbeism and Infidelity*, (which is the case of the *first and highest* degree of Hypocrites, mentioned under the fore-going Head) but, by a *secret* Deceitfulness of Sin, and a Love of this present World, their Judgment is *perverted* to be more concerned for the Authority of *Men*, than for the Commands of *God*; and they judge of the State of Religion, by the measure of such worldly Advantages, as perhaps have *no* relation to true Piety: Whereas indeed the True Prosperity of the Church of God, or the Increase of the Kingdom of Christ on *Earth*, can consist in nothing else, but in the things which will increase the Number of his Subjects in *Heaven*; And *That* can only be done, by the *Prevalency of Truth*, by *Simplicity of Doctrine*, and by *Righteousness of Practice*. For, *Not* they that say unto him, Lord, Lord; that is, not they who make outward profession of Christ's Religion; *shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; but they that do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven. Without which real Righteousness; as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without works is Dead also. For, He is not a Jew, saith St Paul, Rom. ii. 28; (neither is he a Christian;) which is one outwardly; neither is *That* circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; And circumcision is *That* of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter; [whose Praise is not of Men but of God.

III. Thirdly; A lower Degree of Hypocrisy, (but still included under That Name, according to the Scripture-

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ture-motion of the word,) is the Behaviour of Those, who *have* indeed *very right Notions* of Religion, truly judging it to consist principally in righteousness and holiness of Life, and accordingly being duly sensible of the necessity of Virtue and of moral Obedience; but yet content themselves with vain resolutions of *future* Repentance, and for the *present* live securely in the Practice Sin. Against *This* Hypocrisy, this *secret* hypocrisy, this *Deceitfulness* of Sin, with which men impose upon *themselves* rather than upon *others*; our Saviour affectionately warns us, *Matt. xxiv. 42*; *Watch therefore*, says he, *for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come*: — But *be ye Always Ready*; for in such hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh: — *Blessed is That Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing*: — But if that evil Servant shall say in his Heart, *My Lord delayeth his Coming*; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the Drunken; the Lord of that Servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites.

IV. *Fourthly*; THE last and lowest degree of hypocrisy (described under That character in Scripture,) is of *Those*, who *not only* have right *Notions* of Religion, and a due Sense of the indispensable Necessity of Repentance and Reformation *hereafter*; but even at *present*, have some imperfect Resolutions of immediate Obedience; and even *actual*, but yet *ineffectual*, Endeavours after it. These, are the Persons described, *Rom. vii. 19*; *The Good that they would, they do not*; but the *Evil which they would not, That they do*. They are the *stony ground*, on which the Seed was sown in our Saviour's Parable, *Matt. xiii. 5*; who with joy receive the word, *ver. 20*; But for want of *deepness*

deepness of earth, and not having root in itself, it dureth only for a while ; and either upon the Approach of Persecution, or upon the Assault of Temptation from some beloved Sin, they very quickly fall away. Their Heart, as the Scripture expresses it, is not Whole, or Right with the Lord ; but they serve Two Masters, and their Affections are divided between God and Mammon. To these, St James declares, that He who offendeth in One point, is guilty of all ; meaning not that all Sinners are equally Sinners, but that whoever allows himself in any one known Sin, is thereby justly denominated, and will be punished as being a Transgressor of the Law. And our Saviour admonishes them, Luke xiii. 24 ; that Many shall seek to enter in at the strait gate, and not be able ; meaning, that so long as they continue in the Practice of any one Vice unreformed, and are not able to prevail with themselves to forsake a darling Sin, their Endeavours to obtain the Kingdom of God cannot but be ineffectual. 'Tis no better, than a secret hypocrisy ; to account themselves righteous for not being guilty of other Faults, while their False Heart indulges itself in any one habitual known Sin, and speaks Peace to itself by attending only to one part of its own character. If they never forsake this One beloved Lust, the words of Zopbar in the Book of Job are but too applicable to them, ch. xx. 5 ; (and viii. 13 ;) The Joy of the hypocrite, is but for a Moment, and his Trust shall be a Spider's Web.

NEVERTHELESS, such Persons as These, must by no means be compared with those much worse Sinners, mentioned under the fore-going Heads. For, though These are indeed at present in an Evil State, yet there is in them a Root of some Love to Virtue, which affords great Hope that it may in time spring

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up unto righteousness, and unto Life eternal. They are the *bruised Reed*, which ought not to be *broken*; and the *smoking Flax*, which ought not to be *quenched*; They are, what the Apostle calls, *Heb. xii. 13, the bands which hang down, and the feeble knees; the Lame*, which ought not to be *turned out of the way*, but that it rather be *healed*. They ought not to be terrified, and driven into despair; but, with all meekness and compassion, to be continually exhorted, that they finish their Repentance, and make hast to mortify every inordinate Lust, before *the Night cometh when no man can work*.

Thus have I briefly described to you, the several sorts and degrees of *hypocrisy*. The two first kinds; namely, the endeavouring deliberately, under a Pretence of Religion, to carry on *worldly and corrupt Ends*; and the presuming, by the observation of certain *Forms and Ceremonies* of Any kind, to make amends for the want of Truth and Righteousness, of Virtue and Goodness; these Two, are what the Scripture calls an *Abomination to the Lord*, or the highest possible provocation of his Displeasure. The two latter sorts; namely the intending in some particular Instances to amend our lives *hereafter*, or the endeavouring it *at present* but faintly and ineffectually, through the Deceitfulness of Sin; these are the *hypocrisy*, (or the Falseness indeed more to *Themselves* than *Others*;) which belongs to the character of *such* persons, whom God usually *corrects* with his judgments, and gives them space of *Repentance*, and invites them by his *Mercies*, and bears long with them thro' his *Patience*; 'till either at length they deliver themselves by a *thorough Amendment* out of the Snare of the Devil, or become finally *bardened* and given up as *incorrigible*.

THE Use of what has been said, is, (as I observed at the Beginning,) that from hence every Man may learn nor to judge his *Neighbour*, who to his own Master standeth or falleth ; but to examine seriously the state of his *Own Heart*. Which, whosoever does, carefully and impartially, and with the true Spirit of a Christian ; will find little reason to be censorious upon *Others*. *Matt. vii. 5 ; Thou hypocrite, says our Saviour, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's eye.*

SERMON XI.

Who are the true Church of
GOD.

GAL. iv. 22, 23, 24.

For it is written, that Abraham had two Sons, the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bond-woman, was born after the Flesh; but he of the free-woman, was by Promise. Which things are an Allegory: For These are the two Covenants.

IN discoursing upon these words of the Apostle, I shall first consider *What* the Doctrine is which he here asserts and illustrates. Secondly, I shall show, that 'tis a Doctrine founded in the universal Reason and Nature of Things, and inculcated in every part of Scripture. And, Thirdly, I shall endeavour to explain, *wherein* lies the Stress and Force of That particular Argument, which the Apostle here draws

from That Historical Similitude, which he styles an *Allegory*.

I. *First*; I N order to understand clearly and distinctly, *What the Doctrine itself is*, which the Apostle is here asserting and illustrating; 'Tis to be observed, that as *Good and Evil are themselves essentially and necessarily distinguished*, by the unalterable Nature and Reason of *Things*; and *Good and Evil Men* are, in the Moral sense, likewise essentially and necessarily distinguished from each other, by their *Doing* what is *Good or Evil*: So *God*, who can never possibly be deceived in judging, either of the *Nature of Things* or of the *Characters of Persons*; must consequently, in his Government of the *rational and moral World*, be continually determined by the consideration of these necessary and essential Distinctions. For, *What things really Are in themselves*; *That*, to an unerring Understanding, they must always necessarily *Appear* to be: And *Whatsoever* is, in its own nature, *Praise-worthy or Blameable*; cannot but, by an All-powerful and Impartial Governour, be distinguished accordingly. *Virtuous and Vicious Men* therefore, cannot but be in the *Favour* or under the *Displeasure* of God; in proportion to the degree of their respective Qualifications. Consequently, the *Sum Total*, the *Congregation* or *General Assembly*, of all *virtuous and good men* from the Beginning of the World, are the *True universal Church* or *City of God*, the *beavenly Jerusalem*: And All *Impenitent Sinners* of all kinds, are *Reprobates*, or the *Sons of Perdition*. But because in This present World, where the *Hearts* of men are not discernable to each other, 'tis impossible men can be *sorted* according to these Real distinctions; therefore of necessity *Here*, the *true Church of God* must be represented by, and
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in the *Sight of Men* be esteemed to Be, All Those who make *Profession* of being, and in *Appearance* are, what they really ought to be: And even of *God himself*, so far as concerns all *Publick Temporal Dispensations*, they must be look'd upon as his *Church* and his *People*. The *Families*, the *Cities*, the *Nations* worshipping the True God; are Those to whom all *General Declarations*, *Promises*, and *Threatnings*, relating to *God's Church* on Earth, must of necessity be addressed. Men of corrupt minds, insensible of the essential and indispensable necessity of true virtue, in order to be pleasing to God; have from hence always been apt to deceive themselves, as if being Members of the True Church of God, and Professors of the True Religion, would be of real Advantage to them, without That inward Holiness and true Goodness of the Heart and Mind, which as certainly shows forth itself in the habitual Practice of a virtuous Life, as a Good Tree from a Sound Root will not fail to bring forth Good Fruit. The *Jews*, in the time of our Saviour and his Apostles, were almost universally fallen into this Great Error, in the highest Degree and in the most remarkable manner. The *Family of Abraham*, had distinguished itself in an extraordinary manner from all other *Families*; and the *Nation* of the *Jews*, from all other *Nations*; by being Publick Worshipers of the One True God, the God of the Universe; while all other people were overspread with the absurdest and most barbarous Idolatries. And God accordingly had been pleased to distinguish That Family and Nation, with repeated *Promises* of the Greatest and most Lasting Blessings; with *Promises*, that He would be Their God, and They should be His people; and that among

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Them should finally be established a *Kingdom*, which should have *no End*. 'Tis evident at first Sight, that God cannot be the *Gpd* of the *Dead*, but of the *Living*; and that therefore all these Promises to *Abram* and his *Posterity*, and to the True Worshippers of God in *All Ages*, could be no better than mere Mockery, if God were not able to raise them from the Dead, that they might personally be Inheritors of the Promised Kingdom, when the Time of its Establishment should be fulfilled. Upon This ground therefore, the *Jews* had universally an expectation of a *future Life*: And, as being the Posterity of those Worshippers of the True God, to whom all the Promises were made; they appropriated to *Themselves* all expectation of the *Eternal*, as well as of the *Temporal*, Favour of God. And so far as they were *truly*, what they *professed* to be, *sincere Practisers* of This True Religion; so far indeed they had reason to appropriate to themselves the *promised Blessings* of God's *peculiar people*. But, by degrees, separating the *Letter* of God's Promises from the declared *Intent and Reason* of them, they fell into an imagination, that the Promises made to God's Church and People, were appropriated to Those who were the Posterity of *Abram* *literally* and by *natural Descent*, and not to Those who were his Posterity in the *spiritual* and *religious* Sense, that is, who inherited his Faithfulness in adhering to That True Religion, upon *account of which* the Promises were made to him. This error of the *Jews* it was, that St *Paul* in this Epistle sets himself to oppose. And the *Doctrine* he asserts in opposition to it, is; that though the Promises of God were indeed made to the Posterity of *Abram*, as his *Church and People*; yet it was always understood, that this Posterity of *Abram* in the *literal sense* according to the *Flesh*, was but the *visible* or *Earthly*

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ly Church, the type or representative of the real invisible Church of God, the true Children of Abraham in the spiritual and religious Sense, the Successors and Followers of the Patriarch in his True Religion, in his Faithfulness and Obedience towards God. Know, saith he, ch. iii. 7, that they which are of Faith, the same are the children of Abraham; and, are Blessed with Faithful Abraham, ver. 9. For, God's Covenant having been made with Abraham before his Circumcision, which was but the external Sign or Token of the Covenant; 'tis evident the Foundation of the Covenant, was That Faith and Obedience; in which whosoever followed the example of Abraham, and walked in his steps, though he were not of That lineal Descent which was commanded to be distinguished by the External Sign, yet in the religious sense, he was, in God's estimation, a child of Abraham, Rom. iv. 12. Ver. 28; There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither Bond nor Free; — for ye are all One in Christ Jesus: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise. If ye be Christ's; that is, if ye be obedient to the everlasting Gospel, to That Gospel which was preached before unto Abraham, ver. 8; then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise. For, in Christ Jesus, saith he, Gal. vi. 15, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a New creature, (that is, Faith which worketh by Love: ch. v. 6.) And as many as walk according to This Rule, Peace be on them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel of God. This is the Doctrine, which the Apostle at large asserts in this Epistle. And he illustrates it particularly in the words of my Text, by a Similitude drawn from what happened in the Family of Abraham himself. As Abraham, says he, had two Sons; the one by a Bond-maid, the other by a Free-
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woman: And as the Son of the Bond-maid, though, according to the *Flesh*, as truly his *Natural Descendant* as the Other, yet was not to be *Co-heir* with Him, who, by the *Promise* of God, was appointed to *inherit*: So, says he, the *Jerusalem which Now is*, and is in *Bondage with her children*, the *visible earthly Church*, which received the external ceremonial Law from *Mount Sinai*; is not, by That *outward general denomination*, intitled to the eternal Favour of God; But the *Jerusalem which is above*, which is the *Mother of us all*, of *All* who by *True Faith* and sincere Obedience are pleasing to God; This *heavenly Jerusalem*, this *spiritual invisible Church* or *City of the Living God*, this *general assembly and Church of the First-born which are written in Heaven*; This it is, to which all the Promises of God, made to his *Church*, are, in reality, originally and finally appropriated. This is the *Doctrine asserted and illustrated* in the Text: Which was the *First thing* I proposed to show.

II. Secondly; THIS Doctrine (I say) is a Doctrine founded in the *universal Reason and Nature of Things*, and inculcated in every part of *Scripture*. That 'tis a Doctrine founded in the *universal Reason and Nature of Things*, appears sufficiently from what has been already said, under the foregoing Head, in opening the *Nature* of the *Doctrine itself* laid down in the Text; Where I have shown, that all the Promises of God, made at all times to his *Church*, to the *visible Society* of his *Professed Worshippers on Earth*; must of necessity, in the *nature of the Thing*, be understood to be made to Them, merely considered as the *Type or Representative* of the *real invisible Church of God*; that is, of Those who, by the *sincere Practice of True Religion and Virtue*, are, in the *Spiritual Sense*, really acceptable to God: *Rom. ix. 8*; They which are the children of the *Flesh*, these

are not the children of God; but the children of the Promise are counted for the Seed. That the same Doctrine, is moreover inculcated in every part of Scripture; is very plain in the *Whole Series* both of the *Old* and *New Testament*. The *original Promise* itself made to *Abraham*, was not to *Him* and *his Posterity* alone, but that in *his Seed* All the Families of the Earth likewise should be blessed, Gen. xii. 3. And in a little time after This Promise, 'tis recorded, that meeting with *Melchisedeck* King of *Salem*, Gen. xiv. 18. a Worshipper and Priest of the most High God, that is, one who professed and maintained the True Religion in the City over which he ruled; though his Family was not found in the *Genealogy* of the Patriarchs, as the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* observes; yet *Abraham* acknowledged him as a Worshipper of the same God with himself; And not only so, but moreover, upon account of the Dignity of his Office, he paid to him, even as to a Superiour, the Tenth of all the Spoils, that he had taken in a War with the neighbouring Cities: From whence in the *New Testament* this person is justly represented, as having been a Type of Christ himself. In following Ages, when the Nation of the *Jews* were settled in the Land which God had promised to *Abraham*, and God had himself given them a particular Law, by the Observance of which they were to be kept distinct from all the Nations of the Earth; it was still constantly declared, that their Observation of *That Law* was no further acceptable to God, than as it was accompanied with, and became a Peculiar Obligation to, a more perfect Obedience to the eternal *Moral Law* of Righteousness: *Hath the Lord as Great Delight in burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams; 1 Sam*

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xv. 22. The Preaching of the *Prophets*, through the whole period of the *Jewish State*, was to the same Effect; to warn That People against relying upon their being children of *Abraham*, and Followers of *Moses*; if they were not, in the Practice of *real Virtue and Righteousness*, as well as by the observance of *external Ceremonies*, God's distinguished and peculiar People. And very plain Intimations are given in several Passages of the Prophets, of God's intention to accept, out of *All nations*, those who worked *Righteousness*; when, of his own peculiar people, who professed to be Alone his True Worshipers, every wicked person should finally be rejected by him. *Mal. i. 11*; *From the Rising of the Sun even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in Every place, Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a Pure Offering; — saith the Lord of Hosts.* In the *New Testament*, our Lord's Fore-runner *John the Baptist* began his Preaching, with exhorting those who came to his Baptism, *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father, Mat. iii. 9.* But bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. And our Lord himself, to the same sort of Persons who relied upon *Abraham's* being their Father; replied, *Job. viii. 39*; that they could not be, in the religious sense of the Phrase, *Abraham's children*; unless they would Do the Works of *Abraham*. Again: Upon occasion of the Centurion's showing so great a Faith, as *Jesus* had not before found, no not in *Israel*; he declares, that *Many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, Mat. viii. 11.* And concerning his Own Disciples in particular, the Professours of his True Religion under the Gospel-state; he saith; *Not every one that saith*

unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that Doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, Mat. vii. 21. And the Apostles accordingly in All their Writings, are perpetually warning men, that as God is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him, Acts x. 34. 35; so, on the Other hand, whatever mens Profession of true Religion be, God will not be mocked; but, according to each one's Real Behaviour and Practice, whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap, Gal. vi. 7. That, with God, there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him, Rom. x. 12. That in the Gospel-estimation of persons, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ (that is, Obedience to the Commands and Doctrine of Christ,) is All in all, Col. iii. 11. That Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of God, 1 Cor. vii. 19. And that He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; (the Apostle intended it should be applied by parity of reason, that He likewise is not a Christian, who is one outwardly;) neither is That circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose Praise is not of Men, but of God, Rom. ii. 28.

HAVING therefore shown This to be a Doctrine evidently inculcated in every part of Scripture, as well as founded in the universal Reason and Nature of Things: It remains that I proceed now in the

III. Third place, according to the Method proposed, to explain *Wherein* lies the Stress of That particular Argument, which the Apostle, in confirmation of This Doctrine,

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Doctrine, draws from *That Historical Similitude* in the *Text*, which he styles an *Allegory*. *Abraham had Two Sons, the One by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman: And These* (says he) *are the Two Covenants*. Now the Force of this Argument, to any one who carefully considers the Context, will appear plainly to be This. The Doctrine the Apostle contends for in This Epistle, is; that Christians of the *Gentiles*, who obeyed the Gospel; being *circumcised with the circumcision—of Christ*, as he expresses himself, *Col. ii. 11*; were entitled to the Blessings of God's peculiar people, equally with *Those of the literal Circumcision*, who observed the Ceremonies of the Mosaick Law. And the Ground of this his Assertion, is; that not *Circumcision* or *Uncircumcision*, not one or another *particular Dispensation*; but *Obedience to the Commands of God*, whatsoever those *Commandments* be, and under whatever *particular Dispensation*; is what the *Divine Favour* is constantly annexed to. In opposition to This, the *Jews*, in the Apostles days, were possessed with a very strong and settled *Prejudice*; that since to the *Israelites* confessedly *pertained the adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the Giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises*, *Rom. ix. 4*; since *Theirs* confessedly *were the Fathers* or *Patriarchs*, to whom all the Promises of God were originally made; it could not possibly be true (they thought) nor consistent with the Promises of God made to their Fathers, that these *Israelites* who had been all along the *peculiar people* or *Church* of God, should at last be rejected for not receiving the Gospel; and that Believers from among the *Gentiles* of *all Nations*, should be received in their stead. Now in Answer to This *Prejudice*, the Apostle argues very *justly and strongly*, not only (as I have before shown) from the *nature and reason*

of the Thing and from the general Notion of the Divine Attributes; but moreover in particular, from the Analogy of God's Method and Manner of proceeding, in the giving of those very Original Promises to the Patriarchs, upon which This Prejudice of the Jews was founded. Tell me, says he, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not bear the Law? That is; Will ye not attend to the Analogy of God's method of proceeding, in Those very Promises on which ye depend? For it is written, that Abraham had two Sons, the one by a Bond-maid, the other by a Free-Woman. That is to say: Even originally, the Promise was not made to all the children of Abraham, but to Isaac only: Which was, from the Beginning, a very plain Declaration, that God did not principally intend his Promise, to take place in Abraham's Descendants according to the *Flesh*; but in Those who, by a Faith or Fidelity like His, were in a truer and higher sense the Children and Followers of that great Father of the Faithful. In like manner, and for the same reason, the Promise was not made to Both the Sons of Isaac; but to Jacob only. And, among the Posterity of Jacob, All were not Israel, which were of Israel; but, in Eliab's days, seven thousand only were the True Israel; and, in the time of Isaiab, though the number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the Sea, yet a Remnant only was to be saved; and in Hoseab, God says, I will call Them my people, which were not my people; and Her beloved, which was not beloved. The Strength therefore and Force of the Apostle's Argument in the Text, lies plainly Here. What ye yourselves, (says he,) who are so zealous for the observation of the Mosaick Law, cannot but acknowledge to have been originally and always true; the same (says he) is true Now. What was true concerning the Two Sons of Abraham, and likewise concerning the two Sons of Isaac;

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Isaac ; who were the *Patriarchs* with whom God's *Covenant* was originally made ; is, by continuance of the same *Analogy*, true concerning the *Covenant* established with the *Families*, and with the *Nation* of the *Jews*, descended from those *Patriarchs* ; 'tis true concerning the *Church of God*, through all successive *Ages* ; 'tis true concerning the *Jerusalem* that *Now* is, and concerning *That* which is to come. As *Abraham* had *Two Sons*, the one by a *Bond-maid*, the other by a *Free-woman* : And as the *Son of the Bond-maid*, though, according to the *Flesh*, no less truly his *Natural Descendant* than the *Other*, yet was not to be *Co-heir* with *Him* who, by the *Promise of God*, was appointed to *inherit* : So, says the *Apostle*, the *Jerusalem* which *Now* is, and is in *Bondage* with her children ; the *visible Earthly Church*, which received the external *Ceremonial Law* from *Mount Sina* ; is not, by that *outward general* denomination, intitled to the *eternal Favour of God* : But the *Jerusalem* which is above, which is the *Mother of us All*, of *All* who by *True Faith and Sincere Obedience* are pleasing to *God* ; This *heavenly Jerusalem*, this *Spiritual invisible Church* or *City of the Living God* it is, to which all the *Promises of God*, made in *All Ages* to his *Church*, are, in reality, originally and finally appropriated.

THIS Argument, is a direct, full, and strong Answer, to *That Jewish Prejudice* ; which the *Apostle*, through this *Whole Epistle*, is endeavouring to remove. It clearly and distinctly obviates their *Grand Objection*, drawn from the *Immutability of the Divine Promises* to their *Fathers* ; and entirely takes away the very *Ground and Foundation* of it.

AND from hence we may observe, how unreasonable it is, as well as profane, to imagine or represent the *Apostle*, as founding the *Truth* of a *Doctrine* upon an *Allegorical Proof*. The *Allegory* or *Similitude* he here makes

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makes use of, is not alledged as a *Proof* of the *Truth* of the *Doctrine* he is asserting, but as a *Proof* of the *Falseness* and *Groundlessness* of a particular *Objection* urged by the unbelieving *Jews* against it. The *Doctrine* itself is at large *proved* to be *True*, from the *Nature* and *Reason* of the *Thing*, from the *Perfections* of *God*, and from the *Whole Tenour* of *Scripture*: But a particular *Allegation* of the *Jews* against it, is, with the greatest *justness* and *strength* of *Argument*, *proved* to be *false* and *groundless*, from the *Analogy* of a like case *acknowledged* by *Themselves*, in which the *Reason* of the thing is the same.

AND from hence therefore, *further*, we may observe; that *Proofs* brought by the *Apostles* frequently to the *Jews* in particular, differ from *Proofs* brought to the *Gentiles*, in *This*; not that they were at any time *Arguments* drawn from things *acknowledged* by the *Jews*, in *themselves* otherwise *inconclusive*; but that they were drawn *justly* and *strongly*, (as I have shown particularly concerning the *Argument* in the *Text*,) from things *well known* among the *Jews*, though what the *Gentiles* were *Strangers* to.

THE evident *Application* of what has been said, is; that as, in the times of the *Jews* and of the *Patriarchs* from the *Beginning*, *all* were not *Israel*, *which* were of *Israel*; and the *Son* of the *bond-maid*, though equally the *Seed* of *Abraham*, yet was not to be *Heir* with the *Son* of the *Free-woman*; and all along, *he* that was born after the *flesh* persecuted him that was born after the *Spirit*: Even so it is *Now*. All are not *Christians*; who are called after the *Name* of *Christ*: And not the *Members* of *Christ's* *visible Church* on *Earth*, but they only who *do* the *Will* of his *Father* which is in *Heaven*, shall inherit the *Promises*. They only, who live in the *Practice* of true *Virtue*, *Righteousness* and *Goodness*; shall, in the *Spiritual* Sense, be counted for the *Seed*.

SERMON XII.

Rebellion against God as malignant as Witchcraft.

I S A M. XV. 23.

*For Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft,
and Stubbornness is as Iniquity and Idolatry: —*

THE Occasion of these Words was this. Saul being anointed King over Israel, was sent of God upon the following Message delivered to him by the Prophet Samuel, *ver. 2,* of this chapter: *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt; Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.* It may justly be esteemed a Question of some Difficulty, whence it might come to pass, that God should give so very severe a Command; to do that, which, without such an express Commission, could not but have been

censured as an unreasonable Cruelty. And indeed there cannot happen any case, wherein it would be justifiable for any mortal Power, upon his own Authority, to take upon him to deal in such a manner with any Enemy whatsoever. But God, who is the Supreme Author and Lord of all, and who has an unquestioned Right to take away that Life which he himself at first freely gave; and who alone can without errour judge when a Nation has filled up the measure of their iniquity, and deserves to be destroyed by an exemplary and universal Judgment; and who *in the Life to come* can without respect of Persons distinguish equitably the Case of every Individual Person, which in the exemplary Severity of a National Judgment was not so proper to be distinguished *here*; *he* may, very consistently with Justice and Equity, command such universal Judgments to be inflicted when and where he thinks fit; there being in reality no difference, whether *he* commands a whole Nation, without distinction of Persons, to be destroyed by the *Sword*; as in the present Case of *Amalek*, and that of all the Nations of *Canaan*; or whether he consumes them by a *Flood*, as at the *universal Deluge*; or by *Lightning* from Heaven, as in the Case of *Sodom*; or by a sudden *Earthquake*, as when the Earth opened her Mouth and swallowed up *Dathan and Abiram*, with their whole Families at once; or by *Pestilential Diseases*; or by a *natural Death*. All these things, in the hand of *God* who ruleth over all; and who has an undoubted Power and Right over that Life, which he himself gave; and who in the World to come can make that exact Distinction of Persons, which there is no Necessity should be made here; in *his* hand (I say) all these things are equally proper Instruments of Justice; and, without all question, *he* may

destroy

destroy a wicked Nation by what means he himself thinks fit. *Saul* therefore being sent of God with an express Command, to destroy every thing in *Amalek* utterly and without exception; executes this Command in part as we read, *ver. 7, 8; And Saul smote the Amalekites, —and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the Sword.* But 'twas in part only, that he executed his Commission. For in the same place 'tis recorded, that, contrary to the Command of God, *Saul and the people spared Agag the King of the Amalekites, and took him alive and the best of the Sheep and of the Oxen, and of the Fatlings, and the Lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.*

HERE *Saul* was guilty of Two very great Faults; 1st, of *Covetousness*, in preserving for himself the Best of all those Spoils, which God had expressly commanded to be destroyed utterly; And herein he was the more inexcusable, because the Wrath of God had been before executed upon the like Occasion, in an exemplary manner, upon *Achan*, who at the destruction of *Jericho* had been guilty of the very same Offence. 2^{dly}, He was guilty of *Vanity and Ostentation*, in taking *Agag* the King of *Amalek* alive, and bringing him with him in Triumph; when God had peremptorily commanded him to destroy them All. 'Tis said indeed in the Text, that he spared *Agag*; as if it had been an act of *Mercy* and *Compassion*. But this is only *his own* false representation of the Action. For he who made no difficulty of destroying even the *Women* and *Children* without Distinction; 'tis evident, spared the wicked and tyrannical King, of whom it is said by way of eminent cruelty, that his *Sword had made Women childless*; 'tis evident (I say,) that *Saul*, who had made no Scruple of destroying

stroying even the Women and Children of the *Amalekites*, spared at the same time their Wicked King, not out of any tenderness and commiseration, but for *Vanity and Ostentation*, to triumph over him; or perhaps out of too great an inclination and readiness to enter into *Friendship* with him; And then his Case was the same with that of *Abab* afterwards, who, being commanded of God to destroy *Benbadad* King of *Syria*, after he had taken him Prisoner called him Brother and made a League with him; upon which the Lord sent a Prophet to him, saying, *Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter Destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people*; 1 Kings xx. 42: In like manner, in the present Case of *Saul*, God spake unto *Samuel*, (saying) *ver. 11th of this Chapter, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be King; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my Commandments.*

AND as he thus grossly transgressed in the first principal Action, so in the following Circumstances, as one Sin naturally draws on another, he fell into other continued provocations. For when *Samuel* came down to meet him, *ver. 13*, he presumptuously declares, (as if either his Obedience had been entire, or the Defect of it could have been concealed from the Prophet;) Behold, *I have performed the Commandment of the Lord*. The Falsity of which declaration, when it was immediately laid open, by the Spoils, which he had taken, being there present before him; he then first endeavours to transfer the Fault from himself to Others, *ver. 15*; *The People*, says he, *spared the best of the Sheep and of the Oxen*; As if what the people did, was not done by His direction

direction and Authority: Which being too apparent to be denied, he *next* adds an Excuse, drawn from a pretence of Religion, *ver. 15, 21; The people took the chief of the things which should have been destroyed, to Sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; Which is as much as to say: We have disobeyed the Commandment of God, in order to serve him. To This the Prophet makes a double reply; first convincing him of his false notion of Religion, and then severely reproving him for his stubborn Disobedience. First, he convinces him of his false Notion of Religion, ver. 22; Hath the Lord as great delight in Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of Rams. And then he severely reproves him for his stubborn Disobedience, in the Words of the Text; For Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornness is as Iniquity and Idolatry: To rebell against the direct Command of God, to disobey in the instance of a plain and positive precept, to transgress against the clearest Light and most express Declaration of the Will of God; This is an Action of the like Malignity, even as the Sin of Witchcraft: And the persisting stubbornly in such Disobedience, is like the Practice even of Idolatry itself. The Word we here render, Witchcraft, signifies the following of Divinations and Inchantments, which were Superstitions forbidden with the severest Penalties under the Law; and were justly looked upon as a renouncing of God, by having recourse to other real or imaginary Powers in opposition to Him. When therefore a Crime is said to be *as the Sin of Witchcraft*; the meaning is, that 'tis a Fault of so deep a Die, of so heinous and*

provoking

provoking a Nature, that the obstinate Commission of it is altogether inconsistent with all true Principles of Religion, and, in effect, a total renunciation of them.

THE Word *Iniquity*, in the latter part of the Text, is *Iniquity towards God*, the forsaking his Worship, the denying him his true Honour, the turning from him to false Gods, or joining them with him; and therefore 'tis expressed by Two words together, *Iniquity and Idolatry*. Which Two words in this place, do not signify Two distinct Things; but are of the same import as if it had been said in One, *the Iniquity of Idolatry*, the Perverseness or Unrighteousness of serving False Gods. And so the latter part of the Text, is, according to the frequent Style of Scripture, only a repeating and strengthening of the Assertion laid down in the former part, by expressing the same thing in other Words in the latter: *Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornness is as Iniquity and Idolatry*: Rebelling, by obstinate Disobedience, against the True God, is like serving a False one; and Stubbornness in obeying God partially, or serving him only after our own way or humour, is the same thing as not serving him at all.

THIS is the Proposition contained in the Words of the Text; and 'tis a Doctrine, of the greatest Importance in Religion. For, as among the *Jews of old*, so *now* also among *Christians*, most men have an extreme Abhorrence of direct *Idolatry*, or serving of False Gods. And because they hate a False Religion, therefore they are presently apt to cry out with *Saul*, *Behold, I have obeyed the Commandment of the Lord*. But alas! when it comes

to be examined, *how* they have obeyed him; or when perhaps their own Consciences come, in the days of Sickness, to put them upon making *themselves* a strict inquiry into their own Actions; then it appears how *partial* their Obedience has been. Possibly they *have*, with Saul, destroyed the *Amalekites*; have constantly opposed the open and declared Enemies of Religion. Moreover perhaps, *whatever was vile and refuse*, That they have destroyed *utterly*. Whatever Sins did not easily beset them, nor offer them strong Temptations, from their Constitution, their Interest, or their Friends; these Sins they have both heartily avoided themselves, and severely condemned them in other Men. But the Best of the *Sheep and of the Oxen*; the things which were dear to them, like a Right-hand or a Right-eye; the Sins which laid before them strong Temptations, of Profit, Honour, or Pleasure; These they could not but *spare*, and be unwilling wholly to root them out. And yet, as Saul endeavoured to transfer the Blame from *himself* upon the *People*; so, in the other Case also, 'tis not the Men themselves, 'tis not their Reason and Judgment, that chooses the Sin, but their inferiour Appetites, their Passions and Affections choose it for them, and drive them into it even perhaps in a manner against their Wills; And these they are willing should bear the Blame of it, as being a *Law in their Members, warring against the Law of their Minds, and bringing them into Captivity to the Law of Sin*. But further; they can still strengthen their Excuse, by alledging, as Saul did, that they do *Sacrifice* also unto the *Lord their God*; They are diligent perhaps in all the external Forms and Ceremonies of Religion, and
zealous

zealous for promoting its *temporal* Power and Authority in the World; And yet, while at the same time they live in the habitual Practice of any one known Sin, of Uncleaness or Drunkenness, of Injustice or Uncharitableness, of Fraud or Violence, or in the plain Breach of any other of the expresse Commandments of God; notwithstanding all their Observation of the outward Forms of Religion, notwithstanding all their Zeal for the Temple of the Lord, notwithstanding all their Appearances of Piety, not only to others, but perhaps by a secret and careless Fallacy, even to *themselves* also; yet This their Disobedience in any one known Instance of Immorality, This their *Rebellion*, is as the Sin of *Witchcraft*; and their *Stubbornness*, is as the Iniquity of *Idolatry*. Their refusing to obey the *True* God, whom they profess to worship, is like serving a *False* one; Or their *Stubbornness* in obeying him partially, and serving him only after their own way or humour, is the same thing as not serving him at all. For wherein consists the Iniquity of Idolatry, and the Wickedness of serving false Gods; but in This, that it derogates from the Majesty of the True God, and denies him That honour which is *his Alone* peculiar due? And is it not in a manner the same thing, to deny the *Authority* of a supreme Governour; or to acknowledge his Authority, and yet disobey his *Laws*? to refuse to serve him at all; or to serve him only partially, not in the way which he requires and commands, but according to our own Pleasure or Fancy? St Paul makes them that *Know not God*, and them that *obey not the Gospel*; i. e. those that acknowledge not the True God at all, and those that do acknowledge him without

without obeying him; he makes them equally liable to the same *Vengeance*; 2 *Thess.* i. 8. Nay, if we consider things with exactness, there will appear much more Excuse for even the *greatest Errours*, in the Profession of a *False Religion*; than for *Disobedience*, under the Knowledge of the *True*. The only Reason, why the Wrath of God is so often and so severely denounced in Scripture against the *unbelieving Nations*, is *because of* Those things, upon account of which the Apostle calls them, at the same time, *Children of Disobedience*: And what our Saviour in *One Gospel* threatens as the severest of Punishments, that a man shall have his *Portion assigned him with the Unbelievers*; is in *Another* expressed, that it shall be assigned him with the *Hypocrites*. *Hypocrisy* therefore is as the Sin of *Unbelief*, and *partial Obedience*, like *not obeying at all*. Not that there are not *Degrees* of Disobedience in rebelling against God; but that a wilful Stubbornness in any *particular* Disobedience, is absolutely inconsistent with the Favour of God; and that there may be a Perverseness in persisting habitually in single Sins, even like to the Perverseness of a *total Apostacy*. One Mortal Wound destroys a man, as certainly as many; and incorrigible Obstinacy in the Practice of *Any Sin*, may be of equal Malignity even as Idolatry itself. Equal, not perhaps as to the *Degree*, of the particular Punishment it shall bring upon him; but equal as to the *Certainty* of its bringing him in general to *Condemnation*. God requires, that men should serve him with their *whole Heart*; and he that said, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, said also, *Thou shalt not Kill*. But the Folly of Wicked men, will distinguish where there is

no Distinction; and they will serve God in what manner only, and in what Instances they please. This is that great Deceitfulness of Sin, that secret Hypocrisy, which insensibly leads men into a Rebellion like to the Sin of Witchcraft, and into a Stubbornness like to the Iniquity of Idolatry. The external, the formal, and ceremonial part of Religion, they will possibly be very fond of; but the inward and real Virtues of the Mind, Meekness and Purity, Humility and Charity, Equity, Simplicity and true Holiness, for these they would gladly commute, and make amends with any Compensation. This is the great and general Corruption; This has in all times and in all places been the *first* and the *last* Errour in matters of Religion. Saul, would needs Sacrifice unto the Lord his God, out of those very Spoils, which he had presumptuously taken, against God's express Command. But Samuel reproves his Folly, in the Words before the Text; *Hath the Lord as great Delight in Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams.* In following Ages, the whole Nation of the Jews, would in like manner be always very diligent, in offering their Sacrifices and Obligations; as if *That* would make amends, for the Viciousness of their Lives. And yet how often did the Scripture admonish them to the contrary! *Pf. l. 13; Thinkest thou that I will eat the Flesh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats? Nay, but Offer unto God Thanksgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the most High. Eccles. v. 1; Be more ready to hear, i. e. to Obey, than to give the Sacrifice of Fools; for they consider not, that they do evil. Is. i.*

11, 16; To what purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto Me, saith the Lord?—Wash you, make you clean, — cease to do evil, learn to do well; — if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the Land. Hos. vi. 6; I desired Mercy, and not Sacrifice; and the Knowledge of God, more than Burnt-Offerings. And, to mention but one Passage more, Mic. vi. 6; Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the High God? Shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings; with Calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil?—He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Even in our Saviour's Time, after all these repeated Admonitions; the Pharisees, which were the strictest Sect of the Jews, still continued to value themselves upon their mere external Performances; and yet that very Scribe who was sent to tempt him, could not but acknowledge to our Lord, that he had said the Truth, in affirming, that for a man to love God with all his Heart, and — his Neighbour as himself; was more than all whole Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices; St Mark xii. 33: They would Fast twice in the Week, and pay Tithes of all that they had, and for a Pretence make long Prayers; while at the same Time, they secretly devoured Widows Houses. They would with a specious appearance of Piety dedicate to the Corban, that is, give to the Service of the Temple, as much as was expected they should bestow in charitable Uses; only with intention to defraud their Parents and poor Relations, of that Support, which

they had Reason, according to the Laws both of God and Nature, to expect from them. They would with great Superstition wash the outside of their Cups and Pots, while the inside of their own Hearts, was full of Unrighteousness and all Uncleaness. In a word, they would do *Any thing* rather, than what was *Right and ought* to be done; and therefore our Saviour declares, that *except our Righteousness exceeds the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Among the several Corrupters of Christianity likewise, What is it that men have not been willing to undertake; what Journeys and Pilgrimages; what Hardships and Abstinences; what voluntary Humilities; and uncommanded Austerities; what profuse Gifts to Monasteries or Religious Societies, and unbounded Zeal for propagating what they call *Right Opinions*, that is, such as *happen* to prevail, or be in Fashion amongst them; instead of serving God with Simplicity of Devotion, and Loving their Neighbours as themselves? Not considering the Admonition of St Paul, that *if a man strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully*, 2 Tim. ii. 5; if a man runs in a Race, yet if he takes a shorter Way to the Mark, and runs not in that Course which is by the Rules appointed and marked out, his Labour is in vain; And if a man professes to serve God, yet if he serves him not in That Method of Obedience which *God himself* requires, but will go a nearer Way to Heaven, either according to his own Humour and Fancy, or in the Way of Any human Invention whatsoever, following the Authority of Men, of Popes, or Fathers, or Councils, or Churches, or even That of an Angel from Heaven,

Heaven, (as St Paul expresses himself,) instead of the plain Rules of Reason and Scripture; he may justly fall short of his Reward. By conceited Obstinacy in this way of compensating for the Breach of God's plain Commands, a rebellious and disobedient Disposition grows upon men by degrees, till it becomes like the Sin of Witchcraft; and their Stubbornness, 'till it be like the Iniquity of Idolatry. But no Description of the Perverseness of this sort of Sinning, can set it forth in so lively a manner, as the giving some Historical Examples of it; And I shall mention Two, which contain a more exact representation of the nature of this Stubbornness, than any Explication of it in Words could do. The One, is the Behaviour of Saul, in the other Actions of his Life, besides That referred to in the Text: The Other, is the Behaviour of the people of the Jews, in their passage thro' the Wilderness, towards the promised Land. In the first place, Saul after his Anointment, being commanded to wait seven days 'till Samuel should come to instruct him what to do, and offer Sacrifice for him, 1 Sam. x 8; partly through Fear and Distress, partly through Presumption, offers a Sacrifice himself; which was expressly contrary to God's Commandment, ch. xiii. 8. For which, being severely reprov'd by the Prophet, yet in the very next instance, when he was commanded utterly to destroy the Amalekites, he transgresses again; and, contrary to a like express Command, covetously spares the best of the Spoil, to do Sacrifice (it seems) unto the Lord his God, ch. xv. After This, he unworthily attempts to kill David, -because he perceived that the Lord was with him, and had appointed him to succeed in the Kingdom, ch. xviii. 11, 12, 15, 28, 29. And having failed of slaying him with his

own hand, he sends him against the *Philistines*, in hopes he might be slain by *Them*, *ŷ* 17; and gives him his Daughter to Wife, on purpose to be a snare unto him, *ŷ* 21. and that the hand of the *Philistines* might be against him, *ŷ* 25. After This, being convinced of *David's* Innocency, he swore to *Jonathan*, *As the Lord liveth he shall not be slain*, ch. xix. 6; and yet presently after, attempts again to slay him with his own hand, *ŷ* 10; and, upon his escaping, sends Messengers to kill him in his House, *ŷ* 11. ch. xx. 31. This not succeeding, he attempts the third time to slay him with his own hand; and, when he had escaped, pursues him with an Army; and cruelly killed fourscore and five Priests, and destroyed their whole City, for giving him refreshment in his journey, ch. xxii. 17, 19. After This, continuing to pursue *David* with three thousand men, ch. xxiv. 2. he providentially fell himself into the Hands of him whom he pursued; and when *David* spared his Life, and sent him away unhurt, he seemed convinced of his own unreasonableness, and confessed to *David*, *Thou art more righteous than I; For thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil*, *ŷ* 17. Yet immediately after, he relapses anew into his Folly, and pursues him again, to destroy him, xxvi. 2; and falling a second time into the Hands of him whose Life he fought, *David* releases him *Then also* unhurt, and he seems to repent again, saying; *I have sinned; return, my Son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my Soul was precious in thine eyes this day; behold I have played the Fool, and have erred exceedingly*, *ŷ* 21. Yet even after This the History tells us, that the only reason why he pursued him not yet again, was because *David* had escaped further into the Land of the *Philistines*, ch. xxvii. 4. At last, finding himself forsaken

faken of God, for his repeated Follies; though he had *Himself* cut off all the Wizards out of the Land, yet he takes pains to search out and apply himself to a Woman reputed to have a Familiar-Spirit, ch. xxviii. 6, 7; Probably a *Cheat*, like the rest of the Diviners: For when instead of the Woman's practising her delusive Arts, God thought fit, in reproof of *Saul's* Wickedness, to cause *in reality* a Likeness of *Samuel* to appear; the Text tells us that the *Woman herself* was affrighted at the unexpected Appearance, and *cried out with a loud voice* in great Surprise when she saw *Samuel*, *ſ* 12. Which seems to be a plain evidence that her *Art* was a Cheat; and that the Reality, unexpected to *Her*, was God's own extraordinary Interposition. And This takes away the whole Foundation of all those Vain Questions, *Whether the Devil had Power to disturb Samuel or not, and how he could foretel such future events*, and the like. The Event was, that *Saul* went away in despair; and the next day, having lost a Battle, killed himself, ch. xxxi. 4. It may well be wondred, how *Saul*, after so many repeated admonitions, could so often relapse so foolishly: But the Answer is, that Sin takes away the Heart and Understanding of a Man; and that, in another Sense than is meant in the Text, a Rebellious Disposition *is as the Sin of Witchcraft*, and *Stubbornness as the Iniquity of Idolatry*.

THE Other instance I mentioned, is the Behaviour of the *Jews* in their passage through the Wilderness. In the first place *they remembered not God's wonders in Egypt, but provoked him at the Red Sea*, Pf. cvi. 7. saying, *Because there were no graves in Egypt, thou hast taken us away to die in the wilderness*, Exod. xiv. 11. Then, when he had carried them through the Sea by a Miracle, *they wanted water to drink*, Exod. xvii. 2. and he had brought

brought them over the Sea (it seems,) to kill them with thirst, Numb. xx. 3. Upon which he fetch'd water for them out of the Rock: And Then they said; He smote the stony rock indeed, that the water gushed out, and the streams flowed withal; but can he give bread also, or provide Flesh for his people? Ps. lxxviii. 20. Numb. xi. 13. To satisfy This their lusting, he commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of Heaven; He rained down manna upon them for to eat, and gave them food from Heaven, Psal. lxxviii. 23, 24; And then they said, There is nothing at all besides this Manna before our eyes, Numb. xi. 6. Nay, he rained also flesh upon them as thick as dust, and feathered fowls like as the Sand of the Sea: But for all This, they sinned yet more, Psal. lxxviii. 32; and provoked the most High in the Wilderness, Deut. ix. 7, 24. xxxi. 27: They envied Moses, in the case of Dathan and Abiram; and angred Aaron the Saint of the Lord, Ps. cvi. 16. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the similitude of a Calf that eateth Hay, & 19. Exod. xxxii. 1: They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the Offerings of the Dead, Ps. cvi. 28. Numb. xxv. 2. Lastly, when they came to the Land of Canaan, and were commanded to enter into it; then they despised that pleasant land, and gave no credit unto his Word, Ps. cvi. 24; then the land was a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, Numb. xiii. 32. and it was defended by Giants, and had Cities great and walled up to Heaven, and could not be conquered, Deut. i. 28. 43. But when, upon This, God commanded them to return back into the Wilderness; then on the contrary they would go up into the land which the Lord had promised them, and would fight for it presumptuously, and were defeated. In all these Instances, their
rebellious

rebellious disposition was as the Sin of Witchcraft, and their Stubbornness like to the Iniquity of Idolatry.

THE Application is very easy, to the case of every stubborn Sinner in particular: And St Paul has expressly applied it for us in general; 1 Cor. x. 6; *These things, saith he, were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; — neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed; neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted; — neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer: For all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

SERMON XIII.

All Sin proceeds from some Misapprehension of God.

JER. V. 4.

Therefore I said, Surely these are poor, they are foolish; for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the Judgment of their God.

IN the following Discourse, I shall consider some of the principal Instances, wherein men become *poor* and *foolish* in matters of Religion, because *they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.*

And

First; **SOME** there are, who indulge a *sceptical* Humour, and do not believe God's particular providence and inspection over all events. This was the opinion of a certain Sect among the Ancient Philosophers; and accordingly as they thought the life of *God* consisted merely in ease and doing nothing; so they willingly persuaded themselves that the Happiness of *Man* consisted,

consisted, in nothing but Vanity and Pleasure; They thought that *God* had no regard to what good or evil was done by men on earth; and accordingly *they themselves* had no regard to any thing, but Luxury and Pleasure: They said in their hearts, *God hath forgotten, he hideth away his face and he will never see it. Tush, say they, does God perceive? Is there Knowledge in the most High?* The Psalmist speaks of such persons, not who were absolute Atheists and thought God knew not what they did at all; but who thought it *beneath* his divine Majesty, to regard what men did.

Now from what sort of Misapprehension concerning God this proceeded, is not difficult to discover: They thought, and so far indeed very justly, that God could not but be a perfectly Happy Being, *infinitely* removed from all that care and labour, those difficulties and anxieties, which make a great part of the misery of humane Nature; But must he therefore be altogether an *unactive* Being? Cannot he with the same ease wherewith *he made* the World, (a work of infinite Power, Wisdom and Counsel;) cannot he with the same ease *govern* it also and preside over it? Cannot he who at one view sees and observes all things that are done in the World; cannot he concern himself for the *benefit* and *well-government* of his Creatures, by punishing the Evil and rewarding the Good; without diminishing from his own infinite Happiness? Especially since Justice and Holiness are no less essential to him, than Happiness, and even *That* Happiness itself consists, not in Rest and doing nothing, but in exercising and displaying those Perfections, of infinite Wisdom, Holiness, and Justice. 'Tis manifest therefore, that the folly of such persons as these,

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these, proceeds from a very weak and indeed *ridiculous* Misapprehension of the Happiness of the divine Nature; that they *know not* at all *the way of the Lord*, nor have *any* right understanding of the Perfections of God.

Secondly; *OTHERS* there are, who though they cannot deny God's particular Providence and inspection over all things, yet will not believe that he has so great a Concern, about the *moral* good or evil actions of Men. This is the case of those Libertines, who though they pretend indeed to *acknowledge* the obligations of *Natural Religion* in Opposition *only to Revelation*, yet in reality 'tis plain they have no true Sense of the difference of moral Good and Evil at all, nor any just and worthy Apprehension of the Moral Attributes of God. The marks of Infinite Knowledge, Power and Wisdom, in the contrivance of this Fabrick of the World, and in the disposing all things in that order and harmony, which men may admire and adore, but can never perfectly understand and comprehend; are such convincing and undeniable Proofs of the *Being* of God, and of the *Natural Perfections* of his essence, that they cannot indeed deny that there is such a *Powerful* and *Wise* Being; But that he is indued also with those *moral* Perfections of infinite Justice, Goodness and Truth; and that consequently he cannot be pleased with any Creature, which does not endeavour, in its proportion and capacity, to imitate these divine perfections; this they are by no means willing to grant, as being inconsistent with those vicious courses, from which they are resolved not to depart. Now These also are manifestly *poor* and *foolish* in the notions they frame to themselves

concerning God; as if his *moral* Attributes were not necessarily connected with his Natural ones, and as if it were possible that he might be infinitely Wise and Powerful, without being Holy, Just and True. For are there not as evident footsteps of the *Justice* and *Goodness* of God's government of the World, as there are of the *Power* and the *Wisdom* of it? or is it possible that *He* should be an All-powerful and All-wise Governour, whose Government is not settled on Justice, Goodness and Truth? What are Wisdom and Knowledge, without Justice and Veracity, or Dominion and Power, without Holiness, Righteousness and Goodness; but Qualifications that may belong to the worst, and most hateful Being in the World? So that to bereave the divine Majesty of those *moral* Attributes, is to take away from it entirely the nature and notion of God. In a Word; that Justice and Truth are in themselves things good and excellent, and *fit* to be the Rules of Government; the Adversaries of Religion themselves cannot deny. If then God be *Wise*, that he cannot but *know* what is fit; if he be *all-powerful*, that he cannot be *compelled*; if he be *all-knowing*, that he cannot be *deceived*; it follows that he *will* also do what is fit; and then there *must* be a difference made between Good and Evil, and a reward or punishment appointed for Virtue or Vice.

Tbirdly; T H E R E are some Others, who though they are very sensible of the particular Regard God has to the morally good or evil actions of men, yet so far are they from having any right knowledge of *the way of the Lord*, and of *the judgments of their God*, that considering the absolute Sovereign-

ty and Dominion of God, they are so suspicious of things being before determined by an unalterable Fate, that they cannot but be remiss and fall short of that diligence in governing the actions of their Lives, which is requisite to the making men truly virtuous. And this hath been the case of many among Christians; who, though they are firmly perswaded both of the *justice and goodness* of God in *general*, yet being suspicious of things being originally fixed by they know not what secret and unalterable fatality, they have remitted of their diligence in a virtuous course. And undoubtedly it cannot but cut the Sinews of all diligence in virtue, if men be suspicious at the same time, that possibly they may not profit thereby: It cannot be, that a man should with hearty diligence and patient continuance in well-doing endeavour to work out his own Salvation with Fear and trembling, who is not perswaded that God has *really* given him power both to will and to do, and that he shall be accepted according to his diligence and constancy, in exercising that power. The contrary error has plainly sprung, from a mistaken notion of the Absolute Sovereignty and Dominion of God. For though God is indeed absolute in Dominion and infinite in Power, yet he can no more make use of these Privileges to deal hardly with any of his Creatures, than he can exercise one Attribute in opposition to another. God may do with his creatures whatever he wills or pleases; but his will and pleasure is always regulated by the eternal Laws of Justice and Goodness. Since therefore he has placed Man here upon earth as in a State of probation, and set

before him Life and Death as the reward of Virtue and the punishment of Vice ; exhorting him, encouraging him, intreating him, in his Gospel and by his ministers, to chuse Life and to refuse Death ; it cannot possibly be, that any one who is sincere in his endeavours can fail of being truly religious, or that any one who is truly religious, can fall short of eternal Life. So that whatever determinations in Other respects God may have made, secret and unknown to us ; yet This we are as sure of, as we are of the Truth and Faithfulness of God, that there cannot possibly be any determination with him, whereby a virtuous man shall be excluded from Happiness, or a wicked man secured from eternal Misery.

Fourthly and Lastly ; OTHERS there are, who instead of *knowing* and understanding the *judgment of God*, as the Scripture exhorts ; on the contrary persuade themselves, that the Threatnings of God are not so terrible, as the Scripture seems to represent them ; or that he will not be so severe in the execution of them, as the Gospel teaches us to apprehend. And This proceeds plainly from a false Notion, concerning the Mercy and Goodness of God. Men who profess themselves Christians, make no doubt but there is a God, who created all things by the word of his Power, and upholds and governs them by the wisdom of his Providence : They make no doubt also, but that God inspects all the actions of his Creatures, and that he *will reward* the Good, and in some measure *punish* also, at least some kinds and degrees of evil : But then, that his threatnings are so terrible, as the Scripture represents them ;

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them ; and that he will be so severe in the execution of them, as the Gospel teaches us to apprehend ; this they can very hardly persuade themselves to believe. They know the Mercy of God is infinite ; and therefore they hope it will swallow up his Justice : They know the Goodness of God is unexhaustible ; and therefore they hope he will not punish *wickedness* so severely as he has threatned, nor exact so *much virtue* as he has required in his Gospel : and upon these grounds they go on in a course of Licentiousness, hoping that God will either accept their Repentance when they have served themselves of Sin all the best part of their Lives ; or at least that he will have some Mercy and Compassion on them, and not punish them with such Severity as the Gospel seems to threaten.

Now in order to lay open the vanity of these false hopes, I shall endeavour to show briefly ; *1st*, That God's Mercy, however infinite, yet is not so great as to interfere with his Justice ; *2^{dly}* ; That we have no reason in the world to expect, that God will be less severe in the execution of his punishments, that he has been in his threatnings rightly understood ; and *3^{dly}*, That God will not accept any less degree of Righteousness and Virtue, than he has declared in his Holy Gospel.

I. *First* ; G O D's Mercy, however infinite, yet is not so great, as to interfere with his Justice. God is as merciful, as is consistent with the Holiness and the Purity of his Nature, and with the Honour of his divine Laws : His Mercy therefore extends itself to all penitent Sinners, that is, to all who re-

form and amend; but it can never possibly be reconciled to Sin, nor extend itself to any one who continues wicked. To go on therefore in a course of any known Sin, in hopes that notwithstanding our impenitence God will finally be merciful and have compassion upon us, is, when pardon is offered with some particular Limitations, to put ourselves voluntarily in the number of those, who are expressly excepted from the benefit of that indulgence: And to continue in a wicked State *for the present*, with a design to deliver ourselves *at the last* by Repentance; is wilfully to suffer Shipwreck, in hopes of being saved at the last by a Plank. Our natural reason teaches us, that God is infinitely Merciful; but it teaches us also that he is perfectly Just; and the Scripture is not more large, in describing the Bowels of the divine Mercy, than it is in setting forth the Severity of his Justice. It teaches us that God is indeed full of Compassion, Long-suffering, and of great Pity; that he loves not to grieve the children of Men, nor takes any delight in the destruction of a Sinner; that he is willing to forgive, yea earnestly desirous that men would be led by his Mercies, or driven by his Judgments to Repentance: But then it tells us also, that our God is a consuming Fire; and that our Saviour himself, who gave himself a ransom for all those who believe and obey him, shall come *in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not his Gospel*: That the Wrath of the Lamb himself shall be insupportable, as well as the Face of Him that sitteth on the Throne. It assures us that the Gospel, that Last and gracious Covenant of Mercy and Forgiveness,

Forgiveness, is yet the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, wherein the wrath of God is most expressly revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: It tells us of *a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched*; that they who obey not the Gospel, *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*; and that it *shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for those who neglect this great Salvation, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace.*

II. Secondly; We have no reason in the World to expect, that God will be less severe in the execution of his Punishments, than he has been in his threatnings rightly understood, and not misapplied by melancholy or enthusiastick Apprehensions. God has threatned Death and everlasting Destruction, as the Punishment of incorrigible disobedience in general; and in particular, to every sort and degree of Wickedness, a proportionable sort and degree of Torment, in that State of everlasting Destruction, or final exclusion from the Kingdom of God: And if men, notwithstanding all the mercies and the gracious invitations, notwithstanding all the judgments and the terrours of the Lord, will continue incorrigible; they have no reason to expect but he will really condemn them. God's Goodness is infinite and perfect; but 'tis also so tempered with Wisdom and Justice, as makes a more compleat character of the Judge of all the earth, than an infinite indulgence would do. His Love to Mankind

is sincere, and he really designs our happiness, if we hinder it not ourselves; He has given us abundant evidence of That; and especially in his sending to us his own Son, to reveal the grace of the Gospel for our Salvation: But then he has also as effectually discovered to us, that his Tenderness towards Mankind is not so great, as his Love of true Virtue and his Hatred of Vice; and if we *will* be wicked he has given us satisfactory proof that it is not contrary to the Goodness of his Nature to permit us to be miserable. The Angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting Chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day: Those great and powerful Spirits, when by an unreasonable and ungrateful Disobedience they had made themselves unworthy of that Glory and Happiness in which God had created them; he would not dishonour his Laws and his Government by suffering them to continue happy in their disobedience, but immediately banished them from the seat of blessedness into the regions of eternal darkness: And can *we* be so weak as to imagine, that God has a greater Tenderness for mortal Man, than he had for those glorious and immortal Spirits; that he should remit *our* punishment without our forsaking our Sins? So *far* indeed as *our* Nature is more infirm and pitiable than *theirs*, so far God *has* made a proportionable allowance in the Terms of the Gospel: But that he should spare obstinate and impenitent men, and suffer *Them*, more than Angels, to *defy* his divine Majesty; for This, there is *no* Reason in nature. When he had created the
Earth

Earth perfectly good, and every way fitted for a happy life, he cursed it because of Sin, and blasted the Beauty of this glorious Fabrick, because man was not worthy to continue in so happy a Seat. Again, when the wickedness of men was grown great upon the earth, God swept them away with a flood; and though vain men would not be convinced by *Noah's* preaching, but that God was more merciful than to destroy a whole World; yet This threatning was really executed upon them. After this, the people of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were destroyed with fire and brimstone from Heaven; and set forth an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The *Jews* also, when they rebelled against God, how were they destroyed with Sword and Fire, with Famines and Pestilences, with Wars and strange Desolations? These things are all written for our examples, upon whom the ends of the World are come. And if these will not convince us of the just Severity of God; we may consider the Miseries which happen in our own Age and Sight. All the Afflictions and Troubles that fall upon Mankind; Pains and Diseases of Body; and the deeper griefs of wounded Spirits and despairing minds; are all directly or indirectly the consequences of Sin. And if our own eyes convince us that these things are done in the *green tree*; if we see that God executes these judgments in this present World, and upon mixt multitudes, where the righteous and the wicked must needs frequently be involved in the calamity together; what greater Miseries must we suppose are reserved in store against That time, when the judge of the whole Earth shall have separated

separated the Goats from the Sheep, and shall pour out his fury upon the wicked by themselves? His Punishments indeed, will not be greater than the wickednesses of Men deserve; neither will they *even* *Then* in that final perdition be *promiscuous* or *disproportionate* in the *particular* to the case of every single person's proper demerit; but in general, however *we* may presumptuously rely upon the infinite Mercy of God, we see it is not inconsistent with the Goodness of his divine Nature, to make wicked men miserable.

III. *Thirdly* and *Lastly*; G O D will not accept any less degree of Virtue and Holiness, than he has required in his holy Gospel. He has required that we be holy and virtuous, universally and constantly; And as 'tis certain he will not accept a *partial* obedience, so we have no good reason to expect he will be satisfied with a *late* and ineffectual Repentance. His Mercy extends itself to all that heartily repent, and for the future obey the laws of the Gospel; But it does not oblige him to reward those who obey him but in part, or who may seem to repent when 'tis too late to renew their obedience. In vain therefore do *They* hope to become Subjects of the Mercy of God, who either live in the breach of any one plain Commandment while they observe the rest, or who intend to observe them *all*, when they shall no longer have any temptation to break *any*. The Gospel is indeed a Covenant or Declaration of Grace and Mercy to Mankind; but 'tis also a revelation of the righteous Judgment of God *against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; Rom. i. 18: And a very groundless Misapprehension of the
divine

divine Mercy it is, to expect that it will prevent the execution of those just judgments, which are denounced with the greatest terrour in the very covenant of Mercy.

LET us not then deceive ourselves with vain imaginations, but be vigilant and careful, that our Repentance be timely, and our obedience universal; So shall we become fit Subjects of the Mercy of God, and meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the Saints in light.

It is not that the history of the world is a mere record of events, but a study of the human mind. It is a study of the human mind in its various phases, and of the human mind in its relation to the world. It is a study of the human mind in its various phases, and of the human mind in its relation to the world.

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SERMON XIV.

Of Religious Melancholy.

J O B vi. 4.

For the Arrows of the Almighty are within me, the Poison whereof drinketh up my Spirit; The Terrours of God do set themselves in array against me.

TH E S E Words are part of the Complaint of Job under that great Affliction, which God was pleased to send upon him, for the Trial of an exemplary and unshaken Virtue: And because it was sent upon him for *That Reason* only, and not as any Mark of the divine Displeasure; therefore, how great soever the Calamity was in all other respects, yet was it by no means insupportable; because there still remained to him the great Foundation of Comfort, in the Assurance of a good Conscience, and the Expectation of God's final Favour. *He had been all his days a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil, (ch. i. 8;)* And he had in his own Mind, even in the midst of his Affliction, the Satisfaction to reflect with Pleasure upon his past Behaviour, and to strengthen

his Resolutions of continuing in the same Course for the Future. *As God liveth, saith he, who has taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who has vexed my Soul; All the while my Breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my Nostrils; My lips shall not speak Wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. — 'Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me; My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live; (ch. xxvii. 2.) And (ch. xiii. 15;) Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain my own ways before him; He also shall be my Salvation, for an hypocrite shall not come before him. He knew, and maintained it against the Opinion of all his Friends, that God was not angry with him, even at the Time he afflicted him. He knew, that after a short Tryal, God would restore him to his former Prosperity. And if not; yet he knew that his Redeemer lived, and was to stand at the latter day upon the Earth; and though after his Skin, Worms destroyed his Body, yet in his Flesh should he see God; Whom he should see for himself, and his eyes should behold, and not another; though his reins were consumed within him. These considerations very much alleviated, even that singularly great and unparalleled Affliction, wherewith God was pleased to try this righteous person, and make his Patience exemplary to all succeeding Generations. Wherefore, though, in the Nature of the Thing itself, in the Circumstances of the external Affliction, no Calamity could well be heavier than that of Job; yet, when the Disposition of the Person comes also to be taken into the Act, there is a Trouble far greater than His; Namely, when the Storm falls where there is no preparation to bear it; when the Weight is laid where*

where there is no Foundation to support it; when the Assault is made from *without*, and *within* is nothing to resist it. And *That* is, when the Judgments of God fall upon a *wicked* Person; when the Providence of God smites him from *without*, and his own Conscience torments him *within*; when that which *should* be his only Comfort and Support in the day of Trouble, proves *itself* the greatest and most insupportable part of his Calamity: This is indeed, a truly miserable Case; and can be exceeded by nothing, but *That* whereof it is a Part and a Fore-runner, even the Stings of the Worm that never dieth. In all other Cases, the *Spirit of a man will sustain his Infirmary*; But when the *Spirit* itself is thus wounded, *who can bear it*? Then 'tis doubly true, what the Text emphatically describes, that *the Arrows of the Almighty are within them, the poison whereof drinketh up their Spirits*; *The Terrors of God, do set themselves in array against them*. They cannot say with *Job*; *shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil*? *The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away*; *Blessed be the Name of the Lord*: But the Remorse of an impenitent Conscience drives them to despair; and, having no serious Thoughts of an effectual Repentance, their Mind is, like *Judas's*, tormented with an inextricable Perplexity. The Scripture represents the Misery of such a State, by very elegant Similitudes; *The wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up mire and dirt*; Is. lvii. 20. And in the second Book of *Esdra*s, ch. xvi. 77; *Wo be unto them that are bound with their Sins, and covered with their Iniquities*; *Like as a Field is covered over with Bushes, and the Path thereof covered with Thorns, that no man may tra-*

well through; It is left undressed, and is cast into the Fire, to be consumed therewith. There is still a Third State, most melancholy, and truly pitiable; and that is of those, who neither by the immediate Appointment of Providence, as in the Case of Job: nor by the proper Effect of their own Wickedness, as in the Case of an Evil Conscience; but by their own Imagination and groundless Fears, by indisposition of Body and Disorder of Mind, by false Notions of God and of Themselves, are made very miserable in their own Minds. They fancy, though without sufficient reason, that the Arrows of the Almighty are within them, the poison whereof drinketh up their Spirits; And that the Terrours of God, set themselves in array against them. This is indeed a Case, which deserves the highest Pity and Compassion, and ought to be treated with the utmost Tenderness. For, according to the different Circumstances of the Persons, and the different Occasions from whence the Distemper proceeds; so ought we to endeavour, to apply different and proper Remedies. 'Tis very difficult, in a Matter wherein there is so great Variety, to enumerate the several Cases that may happen; and yet, without distinguishing them in some measure under their proper Heads, general Directions can be but of small use, and of very uncertain Application in Practice. The Principal Instances therefore that most usually occur, and the Chief Occasions of such Melancholy Apprehensions, are such as follow. 1st; A mere Indisposition or Distemper of Body: 2^{dly}; A Complaint of Want of Improvement under the Exercise of Religious Duties, and Want of a fervent Zeal and Love towards God: 3^{dly}; An Apprehension of being excluded from Mercy,

ry, by some positive Decree and Fore-appointment of God: *4thly*; A Fear of having committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost: *5thly*; An Uneasiness arising from Wicked and Blasphemous Thoughts: And *Lastly*, a Terrour arising from the Consciousness of past Sins, and from the Want of Assurance of their being certainly pardoned.

1st; **THE First** and the most usual Cause of Religious Melancholy; which is *sometimes* the *only* and *entire* Occasion of it; and which almost *always* *accompanies* and *increases* it, when it arises from any of the *Other* Causes; is *Indisposition or Distemper of Body*. And This, though it is not properly and immediately of religious consideration, yet 'tis by no means to be neglected, slighted, or despised. For as the Mind operates continually upon the Body, so the Body likewise, whilst they continue united, will of necessity influence and operate upon the Mind. And 'tis not unusual, to see the good Understanding even of a *reasonable* person, born down and overburdened by Bodily Disorder. This therefore is a Matter, which must by no means be made light of; but Advice must be given suitable to the Case, and proper Remedies applied to the Distemper. The Chief Difficulty in such Cases generally is, to persuade the Person, that That Trouble, which he conceives to be in his *Mind*, is more truly and properly an Indisposition of *Body*. But he may most likely be prevailed upon to seek for proper Assistance in that Respect, by considering that even where there is *real* ground for Trouble of Mind, yet That being usually augmented by concurrent Disorder of Body, Application of suitable Remedies may with best Success be at the same Time made for Both. And it

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is not easy to imagine, how upon remedying One, even sensible Persons have, beyond what they could possibly have expected, found themselves relieved in the Other. The principal Sign, by which we may judge when the Indisposition is chiefly or wholly in the Body, is This; that the Person accuses himself highly *in general*, without being able to give any instances *in particular*; that he is very apprehensive, of he does not well know what; and fearful, yet can give no Reason why; that he thinks very ill of himself, and yet has been guilty of no Great Faults; and fears that God also will condemn him, and yet is not sensible by what presumptuous Transgression he has merited such Displeasure. In These Circumstances, the Trouble, though without sufficient Cause, may be very great; and the Misery real, though without good Foundation; and therefore it deserves the greatest Pity and Compassion, and is not to be let alone to increase by Neglect; but all endeavours ought to be used, to remove the Bodily Indisposition; and the Person at the same time perswaded as much as possible, that All Disturbance of Mind, not arising from any particular, distinct, known Occasion, is chiefly owing to such Indisposition, and will be removed together with it.

2dly; THE next Cause of Uneasiness and Disturbance of this Kind, is a Complaint of *Want of Improvement* under the Exercise of Religious Duties, and *Want of a fervent Zeal and Love* towards God. As hardened and obdurate Sinners, do by the open Neglect and Contempt of Religious Duties, apparently grow worse, and run perpetually into more Ungodliness; so, many piously and well-disposed Persons, but of timorous and melancholy Constitutions,

are under continual Apprehensions that they do not grow better ; that they make little or no Improvement, in the Ways of Religion ; and that they cannot find in themselves such a *servent Zeal and Love* towards God, as they think is necessary to denominate them good Christians. Now if by *Want of Improvement*, these persons mean, that, notwithstanding their constant Attendance upon the external Duties of Religion, yet they do not find their Obedience to the Commands of God more uniform, their Passions more subdued, their Lives more sober and regular, their good Temper towards all men more universal, their Temptations to Sin more constantly and more strongly resisted ; This indeed is such a Want of Improvement, as they have just reason to be troubled at ; and nothing can or ought to remove This Trouble of Mind, but such an actual Amendment of Life and Reformation of Manners, as the Gospel indispensably requires ; and the promoting of which, is the main End and ultimate Design of all the outward acts of Religious Devotion. But if by Want of Improvement, they mean only Want of *Warmth and Affection* in the Performance of their Duty, which Duty they nevertheless do perform sincerely and carefully ; then there is no just ground for Trouble of Mind upon That Account : but they must be taught to comfort themselves by considering, that the different degrees of Affection with which *different* Persons serve God, depends much more upon the accidental Difference of their Constitutions of Body, than it is any true Measure of the Goodness of their Minds ; that in *one and the same* person, there will unavoidably be different degrees of Affection at different Times, according to the present Temper of his Body, the Order or Disorder of his Spirits,

rits, the natural Passions and Commotions of his Mind, without any real change in his moral Dispositions; that no man can at *all times* keep up an *equal* vigour of Mind, and those who are the *most* zealous, and the *most constantly* so, are oftentimes not the best men; their Zeal being frequently without knowledge, their eagerness often bent upon wrong things, and the warmth of their Affections fixed most strongly upon matters of the least importance: nay, that where the Affections are most rightly directed, and fixed upon their true and properest object; yet even There, those who serve God upon *rational and solid Motives*, and steddily obey his Commandments upon the calm and strong Motives of a *right Understanding*, seem to act upon a higher and more excellent Principle, than those who are led into his Service with the warmest *Passions* and with the strongest *Affections*. In like manner, if by Want of *Love* towards God, any man means that he has not settled in his Mind such a just Regard towards God, as determines him carefully to observe his laws; This indeed is the greatest and most reasonable Cause in the World, of Disturbance Mind; and such Trouble of Mind can be removed by nothing, but by immediate Repentance, and better Obedience. But if by Want of *Love* towards God, he means only, that, notwithstanding his best endeavours in the course of a virtuous life, yet he cannot find in himself that *Passionate Love* of the Supreme Good, which he finds some Writers have described in a sublime, poetical, and perhaps indeed in an unintelligible manner; This is no just Ground of Uneasiness at all. For he may be directed to consider, that the Scripture speaks otherwise concerning

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the matter ; telling us plainly and intelligibly, that *the Love of God is This, that we keep his Commandments* ; And if any man fancies that he loves God in a lofty and abstract manner, while at the same time he hates and is uncharitable towards his Brother, or lives in the Breach of any other of the Divine Commands ; the Apostle assures us that such a one is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him. On the contrary, whoever sincerely *obeys* the Commandments of God, in the Course of a virtuous and religious Life, needs no other Mark or Proof of his Love towards him. For the best and most infallible Sign or Token of any thing, is the *Thing signified* itself ; And he that by his Works makes evidence of the Reality of the *Thing*, needs not much trouble himself to compare and examine it by Definitions of Words. Whatever Principle *Obedience* proceeds from, even though it be but the *Fear* of Punishment, and Dread of the Divine Wrath ; which some have without Reason imagined to be so slavish and sordid a Passion, that God would not accept the Services which spring from so ignoble a Principle ; even this Fear (I say) of Punishment, and Dread of the Divine Wrath, if it is not indeed the *bigbest and noblest* Principle of Obedience, yet it is undoubtedly a *very just and reasonable* Motive to it ; If it is not indeed the most *excellent* Pitch of Virtue, yet 'tis at least a *very proper Beginning* of it ; If it is not indeed a *Part* of the most *exalted* Love of God ; and Love when it is become *perfect*, casteth out Fear ; yet it is at least very consistent with its whole *Progress* in *this* Life, and a necessary Part of that *Regard* towards God, which is due to him from us as our
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Supreme Governour. And since God himself has given it us as a Motive to Obedience, the Obedience cannot be unacceptable to him, which proceeds from that Motive. Fear is one of the natural Passions which God has implanted in our Souls; and our Saviour does not command us to root it out, but only to direct it towards its right Object; *Fear him, who is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* The Laws of God are enforced in every part of Scripture, by *Threatnings* as well as by *Promises*; and the Apostles thought fit to persuade men by the *Terrors of the Lord*, as well as by the gentler Motives of his *Love and Compassion*. Vain Suspicions therefore, that our Obedience proceeds not from a right Principle, from a true and unfeigned Love of God; are by no means any just Occasion for Uneasiness of Mind; provided always that we make but sure of the thing itself, that we sincerely perform that Obedience, by a Life of Virtue and True Holiness.

3dly; A *Third Cause* of Trouble of Mind to melancholy pious Persons, is an Apprehension that possibly they may be excluded from Mercy, by some *positive Decree* and Fore-appointment of God. From *Nature and Reason*, This Apprehension cannot arise; because it is absolutely contrary to all our natural Notions of the Divine Attributes, to conceive that the infinitely merciful and good God, whose tender Mercies are over all his Works, should for his own pleasure, and not for any Wickedness of theirs, eternally decree any of his Creatures to be miserable. Neither in *Scripture* indeed, any more than in the Reason of Things, (but only in the Writings of some unskilful Interpreters) is there *Any Foundation* for any such Apprehension. For supposing there be some
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few obscure Texts, which unstable Persons may be apt to misinterpret to their own and others Disquiet; yet, is it not fit that the whole *Tenour*, the whole *Design* and perpetual *Aim* of Scripture, should be the Interpreter of particular passages? And is not this the whole *Current* of Scripture from one End to the other, to declare, that *Far be it from God, that he should do Wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity; For the Work of a man shall be render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways?* that the *Judge of all the Earth, will do what is right?* that *he will render to every man according to what he has done, whether it be good or evil?* that *with righteousness shall he judge the World, and the people with Equity?* that *God made not Death, neither has he pleasure in the Destruction of the Living?* And if this were not the whole *Tenour* of Scripture; yet, is it not undeniable, that the particular Texts, which speak after this manner, are infinitely clearer and plainer, and less possible to be misapplied, than those which are imagined to look the contrary way? Does not God swear by himself, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn from his Ways and live?* Does not the Apostle St Peter declare, that God is not willing that any perish, but that all should come to Repentance? and St Paul; that God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth? And is it not fit that these plain Texts which cannot be mistaken, should be the Rule by which the obscurer ones are to be interpreted; rather than that the obscurer places should cause the plain ones, to be perverted or neglected? And yet indeed even the obscure ones, are not so much so in themselves, as by our want
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of attending to their true meaning. The *ixth* chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, which has sometimes perplexed the Minds of well-meaning Persons, was by all Christians in the first Ages without difficulty, and is Now again by all rational men, who attend to the Scope of the Apostle's Argument, more than to the Schemes of mens own inventing, clearly understood to be written, not concerning God's choosing some *particular persons*, and rejecting others from *eternal Salvation*, but concerning his rejecting the *nation* of the *Jews*, and receiving in the Gentiles to be partakers of the *benefits of the Gospel*: And the *elect* there spoken of, are the *whole Christian Church*, whereof *all* nevertheless do not attain unto Salvation; and the *reprobate* there mentioned, are the *whole Nation* of the unbelieving *Jews*, whereof *all* nevertheless were not finally cast off: And where God's fore-determination of *particular Persons* is spoken of, 'tis not a fore-appointment to eternal Happiness or Misery, but always to some *temporal Office* or Advantage only. Thus of *Jacob and Esau* it was determined, before either of them was born, or had done either good or evil; that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was determined, what? only that the elder should be Servant to the Younger. And when it was fore-appointed that our Saviour should be betrayed; it was likewise fore-appointed, not that *Judas* should betray him, but that our Lord should chuse on purpose into the number of his Apostles one such Person as *Judas*, whose own Wickedness he saw would make him a proper Instrument of accomplishing that Design. And when St Paul asks, *Who maketh thee to differ from another?* he does not speak of *moral Dispositions*, but
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of *miraculous Qualifications* for *Offices and Dignities* in the Church ; as is evident from the Context. And when God hardened *Pharoab's* heart, 'twas not that God originally made him Wicked ; but his own obstinate Wickedness made him worthy to be judicially hardened, and a fit person to be raised up by Providence for the manifestation of God's Glory in his exemplary Destruction. 'Tis evident therefore there is no Ground in Scripture, for any pious person, to apprehend that possibly he may be excluded from Mercy, by any positive Decree or Fore-appointment of God.

ably, ANOTHER Cause of Uneasiness in the Minds of some melancholy pious Persons, is a Fear of having committed *the Sin against the Holy Ghost*. And these may be satisfied, by considering, that there is no such thing at all mentioned in Scripture as the *Sin* against the Holy Ghost, but only the *Blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost ; And *That* was, such a *reviling* the greatest of our Saviour's Miracles, as to ascribe them to the *Devil* ; And This, by those that *saw* them with their *own Eyes*, and who consequently could have no greater Conviction, no new means offered them, to bring them to Repentance ; And these very Persons were declared unpardonable, not upon account of the single *Act* itself of Blaspheming, but because *such* Blasphemy in *such* persons in *such* Circumstances, was an evident and certain Sign of an *incurably wicked and malicious Disposition* ; As appears from the Words immediately following those which declared the Pharisees unpardonable, *St Matt. xii. 33 ; Either make the Tree good, and his Fruit good ; or else make the tree corrupt, and his Fruit corrupt ; for the tree is known by his Fruit : O Generation of Vipers, how can ye,*
 Vol. X. U *bring*

being evil, speak good things! From all which it sufficiently appears, how impossible it is for any truly *sincere* and *well-meaning* person to be guilty of This Malignity, or to have any reason of apprehending he can possibly have fallen into it.

5ly; THE next Cause of Trouble, to the Minds of some pious and melancholy persons, are *Wicked and Blasphemous Thoughts*; which because they cannot but detest and abhor, therefore they are apt to imagine them to be very sinful; and the more sinful they think them, and the more they are afraid afraid of them, the more apt they are to return. Now in reality, for this very reason, because they detest and abhor them, and are afraid of them, and cannot avoid them; for this very reason (I say) so far are they from being great and crying Sins, or Tendencies towards the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, that in reality they are not so much as any Sin at all, but merely Weaknesses of Imagination arising from Infirmary of Body, and, if they be of any moral Consideration, they are on the contrary rather, by the Uneasiness which they cause, certain Signs of a tender Conscience and of a pious disposed Mind. For profligate and profane Persons, are not disturbed at such things as these. The proper Remedy, (next to the curing the Bodily Disorder,) is, to consider the true Nature of Sin; that all Sin, lies in the *Will* only; and consequently *those* Thoughts only can be sinful Thoughts, which are either Designs and Contrivances of Wickedness, or at least which take some Pleasure and Delight in the Imagination of it. But these which offer themselves involuntarily to the Imagination, not only without any Delight, but with Abhorrence

rence and Detestation ; can no more be any Sin in the Person whom they disturb, than one man's accidentally seeing another's Wickedness or hearing his Blasphemy, can be Sin in the Person that hears or sees it. God himself sees and hears all the Wickedness that is done in the World ; and yet it diminishes nothing from his infinite Purity. And could melancholy pious persons once persuade themselves, that Thoughts, which they do not chuse, are (in the moral Sense) not their own, and that they are to be slighted and neglected accordingly ; this in all probability would soon effectually cure them and prevent their return : for the same reason, as too much Fear and Dread of them, naturally causes them to be almost always present.

Lastly ; THE last usual Cause of Trouble of Mind, is the Conscience of *past* great Sins, and of present remaining Infirmities. Now if by *Infirmities*, be meant such as are unavoidable ; and, if not perfectly unavoidable, yet such as are always incident even to good men ; and always sincerely striven against ; against ; and generally Omissions rather than Commissions ; these are constantly allowed for in the whole Tenour of the Gospel, and the Forgiveness of them annexed to our daily Prayers. But if by *Infirmities* be meant *plain Transgressions* of God's Commands, and manifest Sins willingly chosen upon the offer of a Temptation ; these are and ought to be such a Trouble of Mind, as nothing but effectual Repentance and Amendment can remove. Which Amendment when it has really taken place ; then the Sorrow for what is past, may reasonably be relieved by the Assurance of Pardon. For though the great and principal Promise of Pardon, is made indeed to Unbelievers at their Conver-

sion and being baptized; yet there is also sufficient encouragement given, even to relapsing Sinners to repent. *Brethren, saith St James, If any of you do err from the Truth, and one converteth him, Let him know, that he which converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall bide a Multitude of Sins:* And our Saviour threatens some very corrupt Christians, *Rev. ii. 21*; that because he gave them space to repent, and they repented not, therefore he would cast them into a bed of Sickness, and kill their children with Death; yet still adding, *except they repent of their deeds.* And St Paul, having severely punished a very wicked person among the *Corinthians*, yet at length writes to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps he should be swallowed up with overmuch Sorrow. And the Texts which seem to speak otherwise, yet have not really a different meaning. For when the Apostle says, it is impossible for them that fall away, to be renewed to Repentance; he does not mean to take away the Comfort of true Repentance, but to express the difficulty of bringing Apostates to such Repentance. And when he says there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, he does not mean that true Penitents shall not be forgiven; but that those who by Apostacy reject the Sacrifice of Christ, can expect no new Sacrifice to be instituted for them. And when he says that profane Esau found no place for Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears; his meaning is This only, that the vain Sorrow and Prayers of Men continuing Wicked, (for he calls him profane,) shall not move God to repent and reverse their Sentence. And when St John speaks of a Sin unto Death, he does not mean that repentance cannot remedy it; but that some Sinners

Sinners are as unlikely to *repent*, as some Diseases of Body are unlikely to be *cured*.

I SHALL conclude with this one practical consideration. If, where there is *no* real ground for trouble of Spirit, yet the mere Phantom of a deluded Imagination can be so terrible as men sometimes find it ; *What* then is the *reality* of God's insupportable Wrath, lying upon the mind of an impenitent and despairing Sinner ! Therefore take heed of real and habitual Wickedness.

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SERMON XV.

Of publickly denouncing Curses
upon Sinners.

DEUT. xxvii. 26.

*Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words
of this Law to do them ; And all the people
shall say, Amen.*

THE Proper Design and Use of all publick or private seasons of humiliation, is, to recollect and examine carefully the State of our Lives ; to confess our past sins, with a just sense of our own unworthiness in committing them ; humbly to ask pardon of God, for the breaches of his law we have been guilty of ; to imprint upon our Minds a deep Sense, of the reasonableness and obligation of our Duty ; to acknowledge the Justice and Righteousness of God's indignation, denounced against impenitent Sinners ; and to form within ourselves strong and solemn resolutions, of better obedience for the future. To this end it is, that the Law of God is held forth unto us, recommended with all the Blessings, and fenced in with all the Curses, that are written in his Book. To this end

it is, that the Prophets in the *Old Testament*, and the Apostles in the *New*, represent unto us in such sublime expressions, the Happiness of Obedience; and on the other hand set forth in such moving and affectionate descriptions, the wrath of God expressly revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men. To this end it is, that our Saviour has appointed his Ministers to continue, even unto the End of the World, persuading men to Repentance both by the Love of God, and by the Terroures of the Lord. Which as it is at all Times their perpetual Duty, so more especially at such Seasons as are thought proper to be set apart for Fasting and Humiliation. The proper and Christian Observation of which Times, does not consist in superstitious Distinctions of Meats, for which there is no foundation either in the Law of God or in the nature of things; but it consists in such general Abstinence, as every serious person finds by his own Experience best to promote the performance of his whole Christian Duty. In which matter, because the Temper and Constitution and other accidental circumstances of every particular person, are different from Others; therefore no general Rules can be given for all persons; but every one for himself must in particular, with the Prudence and Sobriety of a Christian, determine the Measure and Degrees of that Abstinence, which the Law of God *has not* determined, and the Laws or Customs of Men have in Reason *no Power* to determine. But *some things* there are, very proper for *all persons*, and wherein the *whole* Church may join without distinction: Such are, confessions of Sin, publick acknowledgments of the righteousness of God's Laws, and solemn Deprecations of his Judgments. Which Acts of Devotion, as they are *always* proper; So it has

has wisely been judged, that the performing them with greater Solemnity, at certain periods or seasons set apart for publick Humiliation; may be very advantagious and helpful, towards the keeping up a publick Spirit of Religion in a Nation. And there was the more reason so to judge, because God himself, when he brought the Children of *Israel* over *Jordan*, was pleased by an expresse Command to appoint the Blessings and Curses of the Law to be read in a solemn manner to the whole Body of the People; and that the People, at the repeating of each Curse, should, by way of *acknowledgment* of the *righteousness* and *reasonableness* of God's Judgments denounced against impenitent Sinners, distinctly and solemnly say, *Amen*. Of This we have a large account, in this xxviiith Chapter of the Book of *Deuteronomy*; in which from the 15th verse to the End, is set down a distinct Denunciation of the Curse or Wrath of God, against several *particular* Instances of great Wickedness: and it concludes or sums up all, with that more *general* Denunciation in the words of the Text, *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them; and all the People shall say, Amen*. In discoursing upon which words; because they have sometimes by weak persons been so misunderstood, as if by joining with or repeating this Curse, Men were in danger of being led into some degree of uncharitable censure, or to express any hard Wish, against such persons as they know to be guilty, or whom they see live in the practice of any of those Crimes to which the Curse is here annexed; I shall therefore endeavour to show, 1st, That the repeating the Curse in this and the like Texts, is not expressing any uncharitable *Wish*, or *desiring* that any Evil should befall the Persons against whom it is denounced; but only an *acknowledgment* of the *Reasonableness* of God's denouncing such

such Threatnings in order to bring men to Repentance, and a *confession* of the *Justice and Righteousness of God* in punishing such as (notwithstanding those Threatnings) continue obstinately impenitent: And 2^{dly}, I shall endeavour to show, That this publick acknowledgment of the Righteousness of God's Judgments upon impenitent Sinners, is very *reasonable* to be made in this manner by all Christians.

I. *First*; I AM to show, that the repeating the Curse in this and the like Texts, is not expressing any uncharitable *Wish*, or *desiring* that any Evil should befall the persons against whom it is denounced; but only an *acknowledgment* of the *Reasonableness* of God's denouncing such Threatnings in order to bring men to Repentance, and a *confession* of the *Justice and Righteousness of God* in punishing such as (notwithstanding those Threatnings) continue obstinately impenitent. And This will appear, both by a careful consideration of the words of the Text itself; and by comparing them with other expressions in Scripture, of the like import and signification. In the words of the Text itself, *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them, and all the people shall say, Amen*; 'tis observable in the first place, that in the very first expression, *Cursed be he*, the word, *be*, is not in the original; and, for that reason, in our *English* Translation, is printed in a different character: So that the words might *as* truly, and indeed *more* truly, have been rendered, *Cursed is he*, or *Cursed shall be He, that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them*. Which is manifestly, not an expression of *Desire*, in him that pronounceth the words; but merely a declaration of *Truth*, that the Wrath of God is actually revealed against Sinners. And it is remarkable, that these very Words are expressly quoted by St Paul from this passage in *Deuter-*

Deuteronomy, according to *that* latter manner of Rendering; *Gal. iii. 10*; *As many*, says he, *as are of the Works of the Law*, Are under the curse; For it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*

IN the next place; the same thing appears from the use of the following word, *confirm*; *that confirmeth not all the Words of the Law to do them.* For as He who Obeys the Commandments of God, does not add thereby any Strength to the Law itself; but yet is said in the Text to *confirm* it, only by *assenting* to the reasonableness of it in his *life and practice*: so He who *pronounceth* Those accursed, whom the Law of God hath expressly condemned; doth neither thereby take upon himself any *Power* of passing censure on his brethren; neither doth he express any *Wish or Desire* of his own; but only makes *confession* of the Justice and Righteousness of God, in declaring his indignation against Sinners.

Lastly; As to the following words, *and all the people shall say, Amen*; 'tis to be observed, that this phrase has in Scripture *two* Significations. At the conclusion of *Prayers and Thanksgivings*, it signifies a *Wish or Desire*, *So be it*: But when it is added to an *Affertion or Declaration of Truth*, it signifies only an *Acknowledgment* of the *Truth and Certainty* of what is so declared. Thus when our Saviour uses the word, *Amen, Amen*; as he does so frequently in *St John's Gospel*; it plainly signifies, as we rightly translate it, *Verily, Verily, I say unto you*; that is, the words which I speak, shall *certainly and assuredly* be accomplished. And when *St Paul* tells us, *2 Cor. i. 20*, that *all the Promises of God, in Him are Yea and Amen*

Amen; his meaning is evident, that they are sure, infallible, and to be entirely depended upon. And when our Saviour declares concerning himself, *Rev. i. 18; Behold I am alive for evermore, Amen*; 'tis manifest, the word, [*Amen*,] does not there express any *Wish* or *Desire*, (which would have been very improper in That place;) but 'tis a strong *assertion* of the infallibility of That Truth, that he is *alive for evermore*. And the Character by which the Spirit describes him, *Rev. iii. 14; these things saith the Amen*, is distinctly explained in the words next following, *the faithful and true Witness*. From these Uses of the word, *Amen*, in Scripture; it appears very clearly, that if the *former* part of the Text be rendred (as it may well be) not, *curfed be he*, but, *curfed is he, that confirmeth not all the words of This Law to do them*; the meaning of the latter part, *and let all the people say Amen*, will be *This* only; let the people publickly profess their acquiescence in, and acknowledgment of, the Justice and Righteousness of the divine Threatnings. And *This* Sense of the words is the more certain, because in the Book of *Jeremy*, where the words of the Text are again repeated, *Curfed be* (or, *Curfed is*) *the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant*, *Jer. xi. 3*; the Prophet immediately replies, *ver. 5, Then answered I, and said, Amen, O Lord*; Which Reply being made by him of his own accord, and without any Command; shows plainly that the word, [*Amen*,] ought not there to have been rendred, as in the form of a severe condemnatory Prayer, *So be it*; but, as a form of acquiescence only in God's righteous Sentence, *Even so, O Lord, Righteous and True are thy judgments*.

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AND thus much, from the consideration of the expressions used in the *Text itself*. The same thing will appear further, by comparing these with other ways of speaking used in Scripture, of the like import and signification. In the last words that *Jacob* spake to his Sons, *Gen. xlix.* we find This expression concerning *Simeon* and *Levi*, ver. 7; *Cursed be their Anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel.* It cannot be imagined that *Jacob* intended to curse his Sons, or bring any *imprecation* upon them, as of his own Desire; but the words are only a declaration of what he was inspired to foresee *would* come upon them hereafter: And therefore in the very same verse he changes his style, and goes on in the Prophe-tick manner of speaking; not, do Thou *divide them*, but, I will (says he) *divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.* And This, (especially if we consider that it was to take place, not so much in *Themselves* as in their *Posterity*,) leads us to the true explication of those many Passages in the *Psalms*, which in our *Translation* seem to be expressed in the form of Curses or Imprecations, but in the *Original* are plain Predic-tions only of future Events. To give One instance out of Many: *Pf. cix. 8; Let his days be few, and let another take his Office; Let his children be fatherless, and his Wife a Widow.* These words being spoken by the Psalmist, not as a *private* person, concerning his own particular Enemies, but as a *Prophet* concern-ing Him who was to betray our Lord; are plainly, not an *imprecation*, but a *prediction*: And almost all the like expressions in the whole Book of *Psalms*, carry with them sufficient Marks, of their being in-tended only as prophetic denunciations of the Wrath of God, against prophane Men and Enemies of Re-

ligion in all future Generations. Again: *Deut. xxvii. 12*; When *Moses* commanded six of the Tribes to stand upon Mount *Gerizim* to *blefs the people*, 'tis added in the next verse that the other six should stand upon Mount *Ebal* to *curse*: He does not continue to speak in the same phrase, that as the one were to *blefs the people*, so the other should *curse the people*; but only that they should stand upon Mount *Ebal* to *curse*; that is, to publish aloud the denunciations of God's Wrath against Sinners, and the Threatnings of what calamities *Would* certainly befall that nation if they departed from God. And This is what *Moses* himself often did in a more vehement manner, and with more solemn words, than when it was expressed barely in the form of a Curse: *Deut. iv. 25*; *When you shall corrupt yourselves, and do evil in the Sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to Anger; I call Heaven and Earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land*; and *cb. viii. 19*; *If thou forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other Gods, I testify against you this day; that ye shall surely perish*. From this form of expression, which is really much more vehement and emphatical, than that in the Text, and yet manifestly contains nothing of *imprecation* in it, but merely a *warning* to deter men from Apostasy; 'tis evident that the words of the Text, though expressed in the form of an imprecation, yet must of necessity be understood in no other sense, than as a *like warning* to deter men from Sin. And This is the more evident, because both from the places now cited, and from the whole *Book of Deuteronomy*, it appears, that all the Curses in that Book were denounced not only against wicked persons *then present*, but also in all *succeeding generations*;

tions; with respect to whom, 'tis plain they could be understood no otherwise, than as *comminatory Exhortations*. For as the Apostle declares concerning the *Blessing*, Acts ii. 39; that the Promise was to *Them* and to *their Children*, and to them that are *afar off*, even as many as the Lord our God shall call; so Moses expressly declares concerning the *Curse* likewise, (Deut. xxix. 14, 15, 19; and iv. 25;) *Neither with you only do I make this Covenant and this Oath; But with him that standeth here with us this day, and also with him that is not here with us this day; For when thou shalt beget children, and childrens children, and shalt have remained long in the land; and it come to pass that one beareth the words of this Curse, and despiseth it; the Lord will not spare that man, but all the Curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him.* The Meaning is evident: If any man despises the *Threatnings* of God, instead of being moved by them to Repentance; upon Him shall those Threatnings finally be executed.

IN the *New Testament* likewise, we sometimes meet with the same manner of speaking. Rom. ii. 8, 9; *Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteousness; Indignation and Wrath: Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.* In the original, 'tis expressed as an entire Sentence of itself, *Indignation and Wrath be upon them*: But yet, from the whole scope of St. Paul's discourse, 'tis plain his intention was nothing more, than as if he had only in one continued Sentence gone on with the fore-going declaratory manner of speaking; *God will render to every man according to his deeds; To them that patiently continue in well-doing, eternal life; but to them that obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.*

THE Apostles were intrusted by our Saviour, with the Doctrine of Life and Death ; with delivering to men the Terms, upon which their Sins should be forgiven or not forgiven ; *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained* : Yet when they retained any mens Sins, as in the case of shaking off the *dust of their feet* against the unbelieving Cities ; 'tis plain they did it not as an Act of Power, nor as a Signification of any *Will or Desire of their own*, that those people should be accursed ; but, as our Saviour himself expresses it, *Mar. vi. 11* ; 'twas to be for a Testimony against them, a Protestation of their unworthiness to receive the Gospel : just as *Moses testified* against the children of *Israel* in the passages before-cited ; and as *St. Paul* against certain wicked persons among the *Thessalonians*, *1 Eph. iv. 6* ; *The Lord is the avenger of all such* ; as we have also fore-warned you, and testified ; and as *St. John*, against any man that should corrupt his Prophecies in the Revelation, *ch. xxii. 18* ; *I testify*, saith he, unto every such person, that *God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book*. From all these parallel passages it abundantly appears, that the solemnly repeating the Curse in the Text, or any other the like denunciations in Scripture, is not expressing any uncharitable *Wish*, or *desiring* that any Evil should befall the persons against whom it is denounced ; but only an *acknowledgment* of the *Reasonableness* of God's denouncing such Threatnings in order to bring men to Repentance, and a *confession* of the *Justice and Righteousness of God* in punishing such as (notwithstanding those Threatnings) continue obstinately impenitent. It remains that I proceed to show briefly in the

II. *Second Place*, that such a publick acknowledgment of the Righteousness of God's Judgments upon impenitent Sinners, is very *reasonable* to be made in this manner by all Christians. And This is extremely evident from what has been already said. For since reciting the Curses written in Scripture, is not *wishing* or *desiring* any Evil to any man; but the reason of *continuing* to recite them, is only the same as the reason of God's *first* commanding them to be written; namely, to move both those that *bear* them, to repent; and to convince those that *recite* them, of the necessity of avoiding those Crimes, against which they acknowledge with their own Mouths the Curse of God to be due; 'tis very plain, that this is not doing *Hurt*, but *Good*, to our Neighbours; being indeed nothing else, than *fore-warning* them of a Danger, in order to their *escaping* it. The *righteousness* of the Law of God, is attested to by the natural Sense of every man's own conscience; even the *Gentiles which have not the Law*, being a *Law unto themselves*, and *showing the work of the Law 'written in their hearts*. The judgment of God therefore, against them who commit such things as their own consciences condemn, is according to Truth, *Rom. ii. 2*; that is, 'tis according to *Right and Equity*; as the Phrase is afterwards explained, *ver. 5*; where 'tis styled more expressly *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God: Righteous*, in condemning those only, who must by all men be confessed to be worthy of Death; (as St. Paul expresses it,) *Rom. i. 32*; who knowing the judgment of God, (in the original, *the just judgment of God*,) that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them; or, (as it is found in some of the most ancient Copies,) who knowing the righteous

judgment of God, yet do not consider, that they who do such things are worthy of Death, and not only They that do them themselves, but they also who countenance others that do them. Now what the Equity of the Thing itself thus compels every man's conscience secretly to acknowledge within him, the *Glory of God and the Benefit of Men* makes it reasonable should be publickly professed before the World; that God may be justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged, (Pl. li. 4;) and that Men may be moved to Repent, by considering that, if they do it not, they will have no Apology to make for themselves, but every mouth will be stopped before God, Rom. iii. 19; and at the day of judgment it will be said to every impenitent person, *Thine own Mouth condemneth thee, and not I, yea thine own lips testify against thee*; Job xv. 6. Not that by making such Profession, any man shall be more liable to be condemned, than if he made it not; but that the righteousness of God's Judgment shall be manifested in condemning men for such things only, as either they themselves professed, or (which is the same thing) could not deny, to be worthy of Death. By which Phrase, being worthy of Death, 'tis not to be understood only, that such Crimes may be so punished without any Injustice; but also that 'tis necessary, in the government of the World, that they should be so punished. God himself therefore, the infinitely good and merciful Governour of the Universe, pronounces Curses against the wicked, not as taking any Delight so to do; but the Scripture always represents him doing it, as unwillingly, as with reluctance, and as his strange Work; Isaiah xxviii. 21. And our Saviour also himself, who loved us, and gave himself for us, and laid down his own Life to redeem us from Death;

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yet even *He* ſhall ſay, to thoſe who impenitently reject his gracious Offers of Life, *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; Matt. xxv. 41. And, in the preſence of the Holy Angels, and in the preſence of the Lamb, who aſſuredly can take no pleaſure in beholding any Punishment but what is neceſſary, *ſhall they be tormented with Fire and Brimſtone*; Rev. xiv. 10. And the Saints in Heaven, who are far from having in them any Revenge, or any Uncharitableneſs, but only a right Senſe of the neceſſary adminiſtration of Juſtice in God's Kingdom, are deſcribed after the following manner, Rev. xix. 1; *I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven ſaying, Allelujab, Salvation and Glory and Honour and Power unto the Lord our God; For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great Whore, which did corrupt the Earth with her fornication; and hath avenged the Blood of his Servants at her hand: And again, (ch. xvi. 5;) I heard the Angel of the Waters ſay, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and waſt, and ſhalt be, becauſe thou haſt judged thus; For they have ſhed the blood of Saints and Prophets, and thou haſt given them blood to drink, for they are worthy; And I heard another out of the altar ſay, even ſo, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.* The Senſe of all theſe places is nothing elſe, but that 'tis reaſonable all the World ſhould make acknowledgment of the Righteouſneſs of God's judgments; and of the neceſſity there is in the nature of Things, and in the Government of God, that Wickedneſs ſhould finally be deſtroyed. And though it be in great Variety of Exprefſion, that the Scripture ſets forth this Truth; yet by comparing the ſeveral expreſſions one with another,

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'tis plain they all terminate only in the same Thing. What Solomon thus expresses, *Prov. xvii. 15*; *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, they Both are an abomination to the Lord*; is in the Prophet *Isaiab* thus, *ch. v. 23*; *Wo unto them which justify the wicked, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him*; and *Prov. xxiv. 24*; in a still more severe manner of speaking, *He that saith unto the wicked, thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him*. Yet the meaning of all these places, is still evidently One and the same; And the Nations *curfing* such a person, plainly signifies nothing more, than an universal acknowledgment of the Reasonableness and Necessity of the Threatnings denounced of God against him. In the Book of *Habakkuk*, the figure is carried still higher, *ch. ii. 11, 12*; *The very Stone shall cry out of the Wall, and the beam out of the Timber shall answer it; Wo to Him that buildeth a Town with Blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity: And in that pathetical expression of our Saviour, Luke xix. 40*; *if These should hold their peace, the Stones would immediately cry out*: 'Tis a highly figurative and very elegant manner, of expressing only the Reasonableness and Necessity of the Thing to be done. And because the Design and End of *All* these ways of speaking in Scripture, is *This* only, to convince men of the necessity of coming to Repentance, of reforming their manners, and of obeying the Law of God; 'tis therefore very evident, that as showing men the Penalties threatned in *humane Laws*, is a kind and friendly office, as only giving them *warning* in what manner to *avoid* them; so reciting, with the same intention, the *Curses of God* set forth in Scripture against all impenitent Sinners, is likewise doing, not *Hurt*, but *Good*, to our Neighbours.

THE only *Inference* I ſhall draw at this Time from what has been ſaid, and wherewith I ſhall conclude, is This ; that if, when the *general* Denunciations of the Wrath of God againſt Sinners are recited, there be and ought to be a great Tenderneſs uſed in applying them *in particular* ; and the Deſign of repeating them publickly upon ſolemn occaſions of Humiliation, is, that every man may apply them ſeriouſly to his *own* conſcience, and not that any man ſhould judge his *Brother* ; (*For who art Thou that judgeſt another man's Servant ? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth :*) From hence we may learn the extreme Wickedneſs of Thoſe mens *pretended Catholick Religion*, who preſumptuouſly taking it for granted, that All who receive not their abſurd Doctrines, ſhall be eternally puniſhed by God ; take upon them to anticipate that unrighteous Sentence, which they profanely paſs in the Seat of God ; and deſtroy mens *Bodies* for no other Reaſon, but becauſe they have firſt with impious and antichriſtian Uncharitableneſs preſumed to give judgment of condemnation againſt their *Souls*. *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues ; For in her is found the blood of Prophets and of Saints, and of all that are ſlain upon the Earth.*

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